

T H E S I S

on

THE SPIRITUAL OUTLOOK OF RALPH WALDO EMERSON

by

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F O R E W O R D

The Spiritual views of Ralph Waldo Emerson have stimulated a varied response in the United States and elsewhere. Diverse interpretations have been made by those who represent different schools of thought. Philosopher and poet, capitalist and socialist, Christian and atheist, all have been able to select brilliant quotations from the Essays and use them in defense of numerous incompatible positions. The unsystematic and eclectic methods of the "Enraptured Yankee" have made it difficult to determine what he believed and taught. Nevertheless, it is the author's view that Emerson had a powerful influence upon men and women, particularly in the United States; however, scholars, students, and workmen of many lands have been stimulated by the Concord Sage. The various interpretations of Emerson's works have caused the author to ask, "What did the New England Transcendentalist actually think and say about religion?"

Studies have been made by scholars representing different fields of thought. Philosophers have examined Emerson's Idealism; literary men have praised or blamed

his essays and poetry. He has been called Poet, Seer, Prophet, Philosopher, and Representative American. The author believes there is need for a careful analysis of the Spiritual Outlook of the Concord Sage by someone who is within the Christian tradition.

Emerson's Spiritual views were inconsistent and illogical; this condition undoubtedly accounts for the diverse opinions among his interpreters. It is not a system of thought, but a system of incoherent thoughts. Thus our task is difficult, for one must try to find the thoughts which are most consistently emphasized.

We shall endeavor to present the Spiritual views of Ralph Waldo Emerson with as little prejudice as possible, allowing him to speak for himself whenever possible. The author does not pretend that this method is free from bias, being conscious that the process of selection involves judgment and choice.

The numerous systems of thought which have influenced Emerson will be noted as we proceed. At times the Christian belief will be stated along side the Emersonian system in order that one may compare the two views.

We shall endeavor to focus our attention upon the Spiritual Outlook of Emerson. The writer has tried to keep

his own opinions in the background throughout most of the study. However, the final chapter has been reserved for criticism and appreciation.

Since the author is an American from the United States, the American spelling and use of terms will be found throughout the thesis.

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CHAPTER ONE

I N T R O D U C T I O N

1. The Spirit of the Times.

The nineteenth century brought with it a certain excitement along with a different emphasis which was in some respects a revolt from the past. In other respects there was a revival of the Romantic spirit, following the patterns of Rousseau among the French, and Goethe among the German Romanticists.(1). The vitality of the Romantic spirit caused some to exchange a mathematical interpretation of life for a spiritual interpretation. The same mood encouraged others to give up a rather lifeless rationalism to accept an intuitional approach. As the century advanced, the infant sciences of biology and psychology became the favorite pursuits while mathematics became less popular. The study of the emotions received more attention; reason and logic necessarily descended from their former monopoly of rule to share an equal place along with the other capacities of man. The Romantic attitude brought with it a re-discovery of nature; an appreciation of the beauties of the natural world occupied many in the intellectual circles. The study of biology brought some to the conclusion

1. An excellent analysis of the terms "Classic" and "Romantic" may be found in the volume of Irving Babbitt, Rousseau and Romanticism, the first chapter, "The Terms Classic and Romantic." pp. 1-31.

that a closer relationship existed between man and the world of nature; others seemed to come to the same conclusion by more intuitional methods. Poet and scientist alike were influenced by this spirit of excitement and expectancy. It was a period when art, science, morals, and religion were dominated by the idea of inevitable progress which encouraged confidence and new hope.

Champions for the new emphases were to be found in many lands. A new indefinite hope was expressed by Coleridge and Shelley in England; Wordsworth was discovering beauty and morality among the hills of his own Lake Country. The elusive "Blue Flower" enchanted the poets and philosophers of Germany; Kant was finding a moral basis for the interpretation of life. Rousseau had already discovered the innate goodness in man, and had issued his call to return to the ways of nature. Much of the rather indefinite hope was based upon the belief of the continual progress of nature and in the natural powers of man himself. A spirit of emancipation, a desire for freedom seemed to be in the air. Some became impatient with the ties of tradition and gave their allegiance to an undisciplined way of life. "Humanity" was a term often to be heard, although at this time it was principally for the sake of the individual. The spirit of individualism found expression in abundant letter-writing and the zest for the keeping of diaries. (2).

2. See, The Lonely Wayfaring Man, Townsend Scudder. p. VI.

The preparation for such emancipation may be seen in the United States in the spirit of revolt. It was undoubtedly the spirit of revolt which stimulated some to leave the old world and migrate to the new. The break from tradition, the severed ties of the Empire, caused some to believe they were a law unto themselves. (3). Some, like little boys breaking away from the apron strings, were proud of their saucy independence. Such men believed the new freedom would be found by breaking the old dogmas which had bound the mind. Those who possessed this spirit of emancipation condemned the theology of John Calvin, and its mighty defender, Jonathan Edwards. There was a tendency among many to ignore the severe laws of the Old Testament and emphasize the love and brotherhood which was to be found in the New. Some condemned the authoritarians with all their talk of restraint and discipline, and suggested that men be allowed to follow their divine inspirations. Of course, some went their ways much as they had done in the old world, but others continued to challenge them to cast aside the supernatural element from theology and to depend upon the natural.

It is not difficult to understand how this feeling of emancipation found fertile soil for growth in the United

3. "Intellectual America was in revolt; she would remain no longer a mere province of Britain; her writers should shape themselves no more upon merely English models." (Binns, A Life of Walt Whitman, p. 94.)

States. It was a new land, vast in extent, and filled with boundless resources. The strange and exciting frontiers were calling to those who were dissatisfied with the irritating restraints of community life. Men did not need to learn how to get along with their neighbors, for it was an easy task to pack their meager possessions and venture west. The United States was in the midst of growing pains. "America is growing like a cloud, towns on towns, states on states; and wealth (always interesting, since from wealth power cannot be divorced) is piled in every form invented for comfort or pride." (4). The youthful spirit saw boundless hope for the future of such a growing nation. There was a carefree and gallant optimism in some which caused them to picture the United States as a new savior of the nations.

Consequently there arose within the Republic individuals and groups attempting to be saviors of humanity, and all manner of causes called for adherents to support their strange programs.

It was a time of many projects for the reformation of the world. Besides the agitation caused by the transcendental movement, there was a wide ferment of thought concerning the social and educational reformation of mankind. Horace Mann was putting the common-school system into active operation, and normal schools were being established for the first time. The temperance reform was attracting attention, and Pierpont went out of the pulpit

because the people were not ready to become total abstainers. Abner Kneeland was preaching materialism, while Ripley and Parker were teaching naturalism in religion. Conventions of all kinds were being held, newspapers advocating all sorts of reforms and new ideas appeared. Among these was the Non-Resistant, begun in Boston in 1839, and edited by Garrison, Edmund Quincy, and Mrs. Chapman. In 1838 George Combe came to this country, and unbounded expectations were entertained in regard to Phrenology. At about the same time spiritualism began to claim attention; and the keenest interest was taken in mesmerism, clairvoyance, and all kindred subjects. Homoeopathy, hydropathy, and Graham diet, and the Thompsonian cure, all came up for their share in the regeneration of the race. (5).

The people of New England must have been partly intoxicated with the idea of reform in order to listen to so many strange doctrines.

Emerson grew up in the midst of these wild schemes, and he was conscious that many of his own ideas served as foundation stones for their progress. "I approve every wild action of the experimenters. I say what they say concerning celibacy, or money, or community of goods, and my own apology for not doing their work is preoccupation of mind." (6).

In the year 1840 he attended a Convention of Friends of Universal Reform which met in Boston in the Chardon Street Chapel. We shall let him describe the scene:

The singularity and latitude of the summons drew together, from all parts of New England and also from the Middle States, men of every shade of opinion

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5. G. W. Cooke, Emerson, His Life Writings and Philosophy , p. 91.
 6. Journal, Vol. 6. pp. 482-3. December 31, 1843.

from the straitest orthodoxy to the wildest heresy, and many persons whose church was a church of one member only. A great variety of dialect and of costume was noticed; a great deal of confusion, eccentricity and freak appeared, as well as of zeal and enthusiasm. If the assembly was disorderly, it was picturesque. Madmen, madwomen, men with beards, Dunkers, Muggletonians, Come-outers, Groaners, Agrarians, Seventh-day Baptists, Quakers, Abolitionists, Calvinists, Unitarians, and Philosophers, --- all came successively to the top, and seized their moment, if not their hour, wherein to chide, or pray, or preach, or protest. (7).

Of course, no general agreement could be expected to result from such a strange meeting. But out of their dreams some tried to build a new order of society. Such experiments as "New Harmony," "Brook Farm," and "Oakdale" were bound to fail.

The new life was not only apparent among the intellectual circles, but was to be seen among the merchants and manufacturers. Trade began to flourish as the fast new ships were built. The simple agrarian life began to disappear, being replaced by a more complex industrial system. James Truslow Adams pictures a "north that begins to hustle." (8). Textile mills began to expand in New England with the coming of the machine age. Emerson saw and admired the rapid advances which were being made in industry. He saw the great value of the railway, and he loved to hear the music of the busy

7. Works. X. 374.

8. The Epic of America , PP. 175-204.

water-wheel. (9). It seemed that many voices united to urge men to close the door on the past, use and enjoy the present day, and expect great events from tomorrow.

Boston was the early center from which many of the ideas radiated. There was a revival of classical literature which opened the way for idealistic philosophy and created a taste for the English transcendentalists. As early as the year 1828 Emerson began to read Carlyle. Oliver Wendell Holmes spoke of the three hills of Boston as representing civil liberty, religious freedom, and scholarship. (10). Both Swedenborg and Channing were immediate causes of much mental agitation. The Concord Sage looked upon Boston as the greatest of all cities, standing as a great beacon to point men to the way of truth.

2. Emerson's Heritage.

Having been born in Boston, in the early years of the nineteenth century, one did not need to be "born again." It was believed by some that man was much too good to be damned. (11). God was much too good, and much too sympathetic to do the damning, even if He were able. Only man was able to damn himself, and man was too busy and too good to think of

9. Works. I. 192.

10. Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 34.

11. See, The Growth of American Thought, Merle Curti. p. 162.

such a wicked pastime. True, there were still a few harsh voices reminding men of their sins, but the emphasis of Calvin was disappearing. (12). Rousseau's doctrine of the natural goodness of man was being preached from the Unitarian pulpits. Before the "super-men" of Nietzsche, super-men strutted the streets of Boston. Men were busily engaged in self-improvement and the steady uplift of humanity; they did not believe their tasks presented any insufferable difficulties. Some believed they would soon reach their goals and universal peace and brotherhood would prevail. The Unitarian preachers had graciously invited God to leave His distant home in Heaven to take up His residence among men. They seemed to assume that God could hardly refuse such an invitation. Henceforth they proceeded to make Jesus after the pattern of their own images and natures. Such super-men seemed to assume they had clipped the wings of the supernatural. The Unitarian clergymen believed they had muffled the voices of the Prophets and they turned to select bits of moral truth from the New Testament. Soon they were to make their own Testaments after the desires of their own hearts.

12. Oliver Wendell Holmes quotes from the magazine, "Anthology," which was published in the years 1804-11. (Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 30.) "The stiffness of Puritanism was pretty well relaxed when a Magazine conducted by Clergymen could say that 'The Child,' meaning the new periodical, --- 'shall not be destitute of the manners of a gentleman, nor a stranger to genteel amusements. He shall attend Theatres, Museums, Balls, and whatever polite diversions the town shall furnish.'" "

Into such an atmosphere Ralph Waldo came to carry forward a noble tradition. "Eight generations of cultured, conscientious, and practical ministers preceded him. In each generation they held the most advanced positions in religious thought." (13). More than fifty of the family had graduated from New England colleges, and some twenty had been ministers. His mother's family had been noted for spiritual zeal and piety. While he was still in the cradle it was decided he should be educated for the Church. No time was to be lost in his preparation, so the normal period of boyhood was simply dismissed. (14). His aunt Mary decided that books should take the place of toys.

Mary Emerson, the unmarried sister of Ralph's father, guided and encouraged Ralph all her days. She was a stern but lovable woman, possessing strong convictions and using little restraint in their expression. She neither argued nor used gentle persuasion, but boldly commanded her nephew. "She dared him to fail to be great. He must be great. And Ralph, smiling and obedient, began to climb toward those peaks

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13. G. W. Cooke, Emerson, His Life Writings and Philosophy, P. 1.
 14. "The Emerson children were not expected to be children. Self-respecting families in those days did not, one might say, recognize childhood. The child was looked upon rather as an empty receptacle, to be filled as quickly as possible with an enormous number of facts, of information, most of it having to do with teachers of moral law, the ancient philosophers of Greece and grammar." (Hildegard Hawthorne, Youth's Captain, p. 7.)

to which she pointed. At first he ascended haltingly and with many pauses, but at length with gathering confidence, reporting at intervals to Aunt Mary where she stood at the foot of the ladder, pistol in hand." (15). The Calvinistic system still lived in aunt Mary, although it was tempered by the spirit of the New England renaissance. Emerson describes his aunt in words borrowed from her nephew, C. C. E. : "She is no statute-book of practical commandments, nor orderly digest of any system of philosophy, divine or human, but a Bible, miscellaneous in its parts, but one in its spirit, wherein are sentences of condemnation, promises and covenants of love that make foolish the wisdom of the world with the power of God." (16). While his aunt Mary had many eccentricities, Emerson was very fond of her and recognized his great debt to her. (17). When he was seventeen years of age, he wrote

15. Phillips Russell, Emerson, The Wisest of Americans, p. 19.

16. Works. X. 408.

17. In the Essay, "Mary Moody Emerson", our author wrote:

"For years she had her bed made in the form of a coffin; and delighted herself with the discovery of the figure of a coffin made every morning on their sidewalk, by the shadow of a church tower which adjoined the house.

"Saladin caused his shroud to be made, and carried it to battle as his standard. She made up her shroud, and death still refusing to come, and she thinking it a pity to let it lie idle, wore it as a nightgown, or a day-gown, nay, went out to ride in it, on horseback, in her mountain roads, until it was worn out. Then she had another made up, and as she never travelled without being provided for this dear and indispensable contingency, I believe she wore out a great many." (Works. X. 428-9.)

in his Journal for February 7, 1821: "The religion of my Aunt is the purest and most sublime of any I can conceive.... It is independent of forms and ceremonies, and its ethereal nature gives a glow of soul to her whole life." (18). He seems to have imbibed from her the dislike of forms and ceremonies. But he gave little attention to the Calvinistic principles which had formed the background for aunt Mary's mind, and which had served her as a basis for living. However, there is an occasional reference in which he acknowledged his debt to Calvinism. (19).

Several of his intimate friends made a lasting impression upon him. In 1815 William Ellery Channing had come out in open defense of Unitarianism. He was teaching men to rely upon their own souls in the search for truth and goodness. (20). His high purpose and sincere spirit was united with skilful preaching. "Ralph and his younger brother Edward had fallen under William Ellery's spell almost as soon as he began to

18. Journal. Vol. 1. pp. 77-8.

19. In the 4th Volume of the Journal, p. 230, Emerson wrote on May 7, 1837: The depth of the religious sentiment which I knew in my Aunt Mary, inbuing all her genius and derived to her from such hoarded family traditions, from so many godly lives and godly deaths of sainted kindred at Concord, Malden, York, was itself a culture, an education." Also, see: Journal. Vol. 5. p. 543; Letters. Vol. 5. p. 546.

20. Regis Michaud gives a vivid, but somewhat exaggerated analysis of Channing: "He had Fénelon, Rousseau, and the Ideologists in his blood, and he had padded his optimism with all the romantic mists accumulated by the de Staëls, the Wordsworths, the Coleridges, the Fichtes, and the Cousins." (Emerson: The Enraptured Yankee, p. 54.)

preach in Boston, following him from one Church to another in an ecstasy of admiration." (21). Theodore Parker was tactlessly storming the stronghold of the orthodox. Emerson admired Parker and looked upon him as the American Savonarola; one may easily detect the influence of the one upon the other. (22). For many years Henry Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, and Ralph Waldo were the closest of friends and shared many spiritual views. Emerson continued to give them his moral support, but when Henry and Bronson began to practice their beliefs Ralph was always reluctant to join them. Henry Thoreau quickly detected this hesitancy as may be seen in the story told by Phillips Russell: Henry Thoreau had been put behind the bars by his good friend Sam Staples, the village constable, for Henry had refused to pay his property tax. Emerson went to visit Thoreau in jail, "Why are you in there, Henry?" said Emerson. "Why are you out there?" said Thoreau. (23).

Emerson always seemed to be more at ease in his study among his books than in the company of friends. He was acquainted with a wide variety of books, but he confessed

21. Hildegard Hawthorne, Youth's Captain. p. 37.

22. "What are the most essential positions of Theodore Parker's absolute religion? 1. That man has an instinctive intuition of the fact of the Divine existence. 2. That he has an instinctive intuition of the existence and authority of the moral law. 3. That he has an instinctive intuition of his own immortality. 4. That an infinitely perfect God is omnipresent or immanent in the world of matter and in that of spirit." (J. Cook, Transcendentalism. p. 56.)

23. See: Emerson, The Wisest American. p. 231.

that he ~~was~~ not a careful or thorough reader. John Albee remembered that "Emerson was a wide, miscellaneous reader and had an eagle eye for what pleased him and made it his own." (24). Thus he acquired a slight acquaintance with the significant literature of all ages.

Rather early in life the Concord Sage obtained a knowledge of ancient literature. The noble restraint and discipline of Zeno and the Stoics aroused the admiration of the New England Transcendentalist. The self-reliant man could use this principle to buttress his own system. The idealism of Plato made a deep impression upon him; but his interpretation of Platonism was tinged with Neoplatonic ideas. The Neoplatonic element was introduced by Thomas Taylor's translation of Plato, and was also the cause of Emerson's interest in Plotinus. The mysticism of Plotinus and the Neoplatonists was attractive to our author. In 1834, before he had published anything, Ralph Waldo had been reading the Oriental literature. Mr. Frederic Ives Carpenter finds sentences from the Hindus thought woven most deeply into the Essays. (25). The Oriental influence may be detected in the first Essay, "Nature." Emerson's evaluation of the eastern literature is apparent in the following: "Yes, the Zoroastrian, the Indian, the Persian scriptures are majestic, and more to our daily purpose

24. Remembrances of Emerson. p. 83.

25. See: Emerson and Asia. p. 19.

than this year's almanac or this day's newspaper." (26). The humanistic ideas of Confucius found a place among the various thoughts of Emerson. From such ancient sources he collected ideas which were to be used to construct his outlook.

Our author was also influenced by many modern books. At an early age he said he carried Pascal's Pensees with him to read in Church should the sermon become unusually dull. The habit of attending public worship was discontinued in later years, and his fondness for Pascal diminished. Carlyle introduced his American friend to the German movement, and he read Schelling, Schiller, Kant, Fichte, Lessing, Goethe, and others. However, he read few of them thoroughly for he seldom labored with the original language. Emerson felt a deep sympathy with the romantic expressions of Wordsworth concerning the soul and nature. He was attracted to the mystical element which he found in Coleridge, and the wilder expressions of mystic Swedenborg.

Books, Nature, and friends, -- all had a hand in the shaping of Emerson, and he made it a daily habit to record in his Journal what he had liked and learned from such friends. He had a happy knack of ignoring ideas which did not appeal to him, and he took little effort to try to put his ideas together into any form or system.

3. The Difficulties in Our Task.

a. The Pride of Inconsistency.

Emerson's "Spiritual Outlook" is rather difficult to analyze because he avoided logical systems. He condemned those who tried to spin their delicate webs of logic, and he boasted of his own inconsistency. He confessed, "I need hardly say to anyone acquainted with my thoughts that I have no system." (27). When the moment of inspiration came men were to say what they thought and were not to worry about any previous statements. Charles J. Woodbury recalled a chat with Emerson, in which he said, "Neither concern yourself about consistency. The moment you putty and plaster your expressions to make them hang together, you have begun a weakening process. Take it for granted the truths will harmonize; and as for the falsities and mistakes, they will speedily die of themselves. If you must be contradictory, let it be clean and sharp as the two blades of scissors meet." (28). This remembrance is in full accord with many utterances, of which the following is the most famous:

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds,
adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines.
With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do.

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27. The Heart of Emerson's Journal, Edited by Bliss Perry.p. 1.
28. Talks with Ralph Waldo Emerson. pp. 23-4.

He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said to-day. Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood? -- Is it so bad then to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood. (29).

In much the same spirit he said he hated preaching for it demanded a pledge, and he wished to be free to contradict his pledge should he feel differently to-morrow. With such an attitude one should expect him to be a man of thoughts rather than a man of thought. As the "Humble Bee" he flitted from book to book, from philosopher to philosopher, gathering a bit of wisdom here and a bit of wisdom there.

Since he had no system in the usual sense, he believed he had found a divine system, or rather was given a divine system. Speaking of the mind and its thoughts, he said, "There is no method. Leave them now, and return to them again. Domesticate them in your mind, do not force them into arrangement too hastily, and presently you shall find they take their own order. And the order they assume is divine. It is God's architecture." (30).

With no system, but God's system, he expressed many contradictory ideas, and seemed to hold many incompatible ideas in his mind at one time. One may choose ideas from him to

29. Works. II. 57-8.

30. Journal. Vol. 2. p. 446. January 7, 1832. Also see: Works. XII. 11-13.

illustrate almost any religious belief or philosophy. How is one to understand a man, who, as G. W. Cooke says, "On one page he is a grim believer in fate and nature; the next shows how strong his faith in divine grace, that we are nothing but by the will of God; and only a page or two beyond, he asserts the absolute spontaneity of the mystic; before the essay ends, he is a sober moralist teaching the plainest lessons of duty." (31). The deliberate practice of inconsistency does not make easy the task of interpretation. The difficulty is not only due to his own contempt for consistency, but also to his habit of choosing his ideas from various sources which represent conflicting theories.

b. The Eclectic Method.

Emerson hastily scanned books from all quarters and recorded in his Journal quotations and ideas that occurred to him as he read; such material provided him with the content of his lectures and essays. (32). Little care is given to the accuracy of quotation, and often no credit is given for the idea. Oliver Wendell Holmes said he borrowed from all

31. Emerson, His Life Writings and Philosophy. p. 272. Also cf. Phillips Russell, Emerson, The Wisest American, pp. 186-7.

32. "He seldom assimilated any foreign idea till he had come upon it several times. When he did find such an idea to his liking, he copied the significant outline of it into his Journals, and gradually absorbed it more completely into his mind. Finally he reinterpreted it in his Essays, and gave it new connection and meaning." (Frederic Ives Carpenter, Emerson and Asia, p. 13.)

with little hesitation. (33). The "Enraptured Yankee" was conscious of this habit, and made an attempt to defend himself.

If an author gives us just distinctions, inspiring lessons, or imaginative poetry, it is not so important to us whose they are.... The nobler the truth or sentiment, the less imports the question of authorship.... Whoever expressed to us a just thought makes ridiculous the pains of the critic who should tell him where such a word had been said before. 'It is no more according to Plato than according to me.' (34).

It has been said that he often quoted Scripture in a very unusual and indeed amusing manner, at times perverting the original meaning. (35).

It was his practice to select bright ideas which pleased him, giving little effort to arrange them into a philosophical pattern. Ideas from the east and from the west, bright phrases from the Stoic philosophy and from Romantic poets, the more mystical expressions which he noted among his Quaker friends, each idea found a place in his mind for the moment. Mr. Christy says of him, "He took only that which he could accept and mix successfully with his inhibitions and preconceptions." (36).

33. "The reason why Emerson has so much to say on this subject of borrowing, especially when treating of Plato and Shakespeare, is obvious enough. He was arguing in his own cause, -- not defending himself, as if there were some charge of plagiarism to be met, but making the proud claim of eminent domain in behalf of the master who knew how to use his acquisitions." (Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 205.)

34. Works. VIII. 191; 192; 192-3.

35. See: Edward Waldo Emerson, Emerson in Concord. p. 159.

36. The Orient in American Transcendentalism. p. 182.

This eclectic method, the willingness to accept any idea from any age or culture, made him appear most tolerant. The monism of India undoubtedly caused him to cultivate a mental gregariousness which the Christian could not accept. The idea that every road leads to the same goal, the road of the saint and the road of the murderer being the same approach to God, can find little Christian support. His ability to hold so many incompatible ideas in his mind at the same time, G. W. Cooke has called "Yankee balance." (37). We must question the use of the term "balance." In spite of all this eclecticism he was able to live a fairly balanced life because he did not try to act according to the various conflicting views which he seemed to hold in his mind.

c. The Spectator of Life.

The New England Transcendentalist liked to think and speak of himself as an observer or spectator of life.

But lest I should mislead any when I have my own head and obey my whims, let me remind the reader that I am only an experimenter. Do not set the least value on what I do, or the least discredit on what I do not, as if I pretended to settle anything as true or false. I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred, none are profane; I simply experiment, an endless seeker with no Past at my back. (38).

37. Emerson, His Life Writings and Philosophy. p. 188.

38. Works. II. 221. Also, Journal. Vol. 5. pp. 460-1. Writing to George Bust on September 2, 1838, Emerson said, "It is my habit to assume always as purely as I can the attitude of an observer, and to record what I see. I am not responsible for the fact; for the truth of the record, I am." (Letters. Vol. 2. p. 156.)

Throughout his life he was comparatively successful in his attempt to stand at the edge of the crowd and watch without entering into the activities of life. True, he was willing to criticize and attempt to unsettle the minds of men. But he insisted upon wearing the robe of inaction until he could be sure he acted with a knowledge of the whole truth, and he persisted in calling this inaction a "wise passiveness." (39). The writer does not believe it possible for a spectator to have an adequate understanding of life. One can hardly refrain from asking why the Concord Sage chose to become an observer of life. We are told that in his own home he cautiously tried out a few of his ideas. One day the servants in the home were asked to come in and eat with the master at his table, but they were not happy about eating with the master, and the whole attempt was abandoned. Holmes said that it never occurred to Emerson to leave his comfortable home and try to live out his theories in a shanty as Thoreau had done. (40). But he did try camping out in the wild woods and found the hardships too inconvenient.

There is some evidence that his conscience was troubled by his failure to act upon his ideas. In his poem "Compensation" he asked,

Why should I keep holiday
When other men have none? (41).

39. Journal. Vol. 5. pp. 294-5. October 21, 1839.

40. Ralph Waldo Emerson. p. 143.

41. Works. IX. 83..

In another place he said, "I accuse myself of sloth and unprofitableness day by day; but when these waves of God flow into me I no longer reckon lost time." (42). We shall let others judge whether his inactivity was a product of purposeful choice, or whether it was a product of his own temperament.

However, as a mere observer, he believed he had certain advantages over others: namely, arriving at truth which would be free from any false additions from the mind itself. (43). Because he presented no logical system he felt he possessed no preconceptions of life. By mere observation with his unbiased mind he believed he could arrive at incontrovertible truth. "I am so purely a spectator that I have absolute confidence that all pure spectators will agree with me, whenever I make a careful report. I told Alcott that every one of my expressions concerning "God", or the "soul", etc., is entitled to attention as testimony, because it is independent, not calculated, not part of any system, but spontaneous, and

42. Works. II. 317.

43. "The Transcendentalist or Realist is distinguished from the Churchman herein, that he limits his affirmations to his perception, and never goes beyond the warrant of his experience (spiritual and sensuous) in his creed. Whilst the Churchman affirms many things received on testimony as of equal value with the moral intuitions.

"I told Mr. Means that he need not consult the Germans, but, if he wished at any time to know what the Transcendentalists believed, he might simply omit what in his own mind he added from tradition, and the rest would be Transcendentalism." (Journal. Vol. 6. p. 380.)

nearest word I could find to the thing." (44). Many American novelists, attempting to be realistic, have tried to make the same assumption, but each has necessarily made his selections according to some principles.

d. The Style of Emerson.

The various inconsistent ideas are to be found expressed in a style which fitted his illogical method of thinking. Many paragraphs seem to have little relationship with the ideas of the preceding or following paragraphs. He was noted for the short, pithy epigrams; some he selected from his wide reading, others he coined himself. Various opinions of his style have been expressed by his critics. "But though he was in certain quarters the cynosure of admiration, in others he was the butt of ridicule. This same year the London Athenaeum praised Irving because, as it said, his fancies were ideal, and not like Emerson's merely typographical -- because they did not consist, like the latter's, in the use of verbs for nouns, in erratic punctuation, tumid epithets, which were startling rather than apposite, or in foreign forms and idioms." (45). Emerson was conscious of his unusual style and seemed to be proud of it. He said of himself, "I write anecdotes

44. Journal. Vol. 10. p. 191. 1867.

45. Henry Bryan Binns, A Life of Walt Whitman. p. 93.

of the intellect; a sort of Farmer's Almanac of mental moods." (46). Oliver Wendell Holmes had caught the flavor of his style when he said, "His paragraphs are full of brittle sentences that break apart and are independent units, like the fragments of a coral colony." (47). Mr. Christy believes that his laconic style, interesting stories and metaphors show the influence of Oriental literature. (48). However, there was a spirited quality in the Essays which caused them to receive a popular reception in many lands.

The clever, attractive sentences which he read from the lecture platform with a good voice attracted crowds. Both the common-man and the intellectual man were deeply moved by his lectures without being able to understand or explain the reason. Some believed it would have made little difference had he reversed his lecture, beginning at the end and continuing toward the beginning. Toward the end of his life he often forgot sections of his lecture and went forward without being discovered. But still the people came to listen to him. "It became the fashion to listen to Emerson's lectures and to ask what they meant; or to refer to some one who professed to understand them." (49). It is probable, as some suggest, that the success of his lectures depended upon his attractive style and his excellent voice. It is also quite possible that

46. Works. XII. 11.

47. Ralph Waldo Emerson. p. 404; cf. Hildegard Hawthorne, Youth's Captain. p. 103.

48. The Orient in American Transcendentalism. pp. 155-9.

49. John Albee, Remembrances of Emerson. p. 13.

people like to hear someone tell them and persuade them that they are much better and greater than they seem.

e. Emerson: Poet or Prophet?

The "Enraptured Yankee" would be the first to confess that he had no system of thought, except a divine system; that his style was not logical or coherent, for these things were not a part of his purpose. He looked upon himself as a poet or a seer, not a philosopher, metaphysician, or theologian. On March 1, 1842, after a visit with Horace Greely and Arthur Brisbane in New York, he wrote to his wife: "They are bent on popular action; I am in all my theory, ethics, and politics a poet and of no more use in their New York than a rainbow or a firefly." (50). It was this poetic spirit which made him discontented with the Unitarians, for he saw they had little interest in the imagination of the poet. (51). He was always in search of moments of inspiration which could excite him to express his insights with skill. He sought the company of certain men who stimulated him to think, and he was fond of studying his own reactions in their presence.

Many friends were conscious of the poetic spirit in Emerson, and several biographers have noticed this element. His close friend, Bronson Alcott, looked upon him as a poet.

50. Letters. Vol. 3. p. 18.

51. See: Ibid. Vol. 3. p. 118.

"Not a metaphysician, and rightly discarding any claims to systematic thinking; a poet in spirit, if not always in form; the consistent idealist, yet the realist none the less, he has illustrated the learning and thought of former times on the noblest themes, and come nearest of any to emancipating the mind of his own time from the errors and dreams of past ages." (52). Ramakrishna understands his contradictions and incoherence to be the license and elusiveness of the poet. (53). The Concord Sage chose not to question or argue about philosophy or creed, but to seek absorption in the joy and blessedness of the union of the individual soul with the Over-Soul.

f. The General Direction of Emerson's Thought.

Several suggestions have already been made which illustrate the difficulty of analyzing his outlook. His epigrammatic style, his eclectic selection, and his illogical thinking make interpretation difficult. No single essay may be taken as an indication of his outlook. Since he has been influenced by so many conflicting systems of thought, he may be classified under no single system. In fact, he was not willing to follow human reason as a guide. "With our faith that every man is a possessed person having that admirable Prompter at his ear,

52. Bronson Alcott, Emerson, Philosopher and Seer. pp. 31-2.

53. See: Emerson: His Muse and Message. p. 5.

is it not a little superfluous to go about to reason with a person so advised?" (54).

Under such circumstances, it seems advisable to attempt to point out the general direction which he most consistently took, and it will be our task to present the major emphases. He felt there was a very close relationship among God, man, and nature. There are times when he failed to see the dividing line between God and man, between Nature and God, and between man and Nature. But for purposes of clarification, we shall present his idea of God, his theory about man, and his interpretation of Nature. And wherever possible we shall try to identify the sources of the various ideas by which he was influenced.

CHAPTER TWO

A F I R S T - H A N D R E L I G I O N

1. The Revolt from Tradition.

Religion was one of the primary interests of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and a spiritual mood pervades his various works. His spiritual outlook is not to be identified with the orthodox faith of the Christian; for our author emphasized and exaggerated one element of the Christian faith, namely: the element of intuition. He insisted upon looking at religion as a first-hand experience, in opposition to what he called the "second hand religion" which existed all about him in New England. "Meantime, whilst the doors of the temple stand open, night and day, before every man, and the oracles of this truth cease never, it is guarded by one stern condition; this, namely: it is an intuition. It cannot be received at second hand." (1). Against this second hand religion he took his position to battle for a pure spiritual faith.

Emerson's hate for tradition stimulated his revolt from orthodox Christianity as it was expressed in his day by the Calvinistic faith of New England. He believed the original spirit of Christianity had been smothered by excessive form

1. Works. I. 126-7.

and tradition and no longer had a place in the modern world. "Calvinism and Christianity, being now ended, shall be ended. Their powerful contribution to the history shall be acknowledged." (2). Believing this, he urged men to abandon the traditional forms of Christianity and to accept the help of an immanent God whom he saw at work in man and nature alike. He endeavored to turn men's attention from the things of the lifeless past to the new untried universe of the present day. The second hand knowledge of God, as presented by St. Paul, George Fox, or other noted religious leaders, should receive less reverence; preference should be given to intuitional knowledge as it comes to each individual. He would encourage no man to follow master or hero. "Let me admonish you, first of all, to go alone; to refuse the good models, even those which are sacred in the imagination of men, and dare to love God without mediator or veil. Friends enough you shall find who will hold up to your emulation Wesleys and Oberlins, Saints and Prophets. Thank God for these good men, but say, 'I also am a man.'" (3). He looked upon historical figures as shadows which clouded all spiritual reality. The experiences of other men were not satisfactory to him since he was capable of a direct relationship with God. "Everywhere I am hindered of meeting God in my brother, because he has shut

2. Journal. Vol. 7. pp. 232-3.

3. Works. I. 145,

his own temple doors and recites fables merely of his brother's, or his brother's brother's God." (4). If he were called upon to give a charge to the young ministers of his day, he said he would choose to tell them to beware of all tradition because it embarrasses and falsifies all teaching.

He was equally irritated by the traditional forms of worship, the religious creeds, and the authority of the Church. He looked upon the creeds of the Church as a disease of the intellect; he believed the creeds had long since been outworn and should be discarded. Whenever truths have reached the point of being forged into formal creeds, it was a definite indication to him that the truths have been corrupted and outworn. The sacraments of the Church are banished from his mind in much the same manner. "When once Seldon had said that the priests seemed to be baptizing their own fingers, the rite of baptism was getting late in the world." (5). An external form or authority of the Church or clergy he considered an indication of the decline of true religion. He thought the clergymen were becoming dull; their preaching was becoming ineffectual because they were preaching from memory and not out of their own inward experiences. He complained, "It is the old story again: once we had wooden chalices and golden priests, now we have golden chalices and wooden priests." (6). To free

4. Works. II. 79.

5. Works. X. 108-9.

6. Works. X. 229.

himself and civilization from such unhappy conditions, he made an effort to separate the religious spirit from all forms and creeds.

The revolt against Calvinism may be partly due to the influence of the Puritan element which was prevalent at this time in New England. (7). He seemed to make it his main task to try to break the power of the Calvinistic system. He was convinced that traditional religion discouraged the idea of personal revelation and inspiration. "It is not in the power of God to make a communication of his will to a Calvinist. For to every inward revelation he holds up his silly book, and quotes chapter and verse against the Book-Maker and the Man-Maker, against that which quotes not, but is and cometh. There is a light older than intellect, by which the intellect lives and works, always new, and which degrades

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7. "To understand what Emerson did on this day it is important to keep these distinctions clear; for confused history has somehow identified Calvinism with Puritanism, which was another thing and had a different lineage. Puritanism had its birth in a revolt against what it deemed to be superfluous and distracting religious ritualism. It did not, in its beginnings, hate harmless human joys, or try to regulate human behaviour. A Calvinist might be also a Puritan; but a Puritan was not necessarily a Calvinist (Emerson, for example, was a Puritan, but not a Calvinist); and it is not Puritanism which has left to American civilization its legacy of dogma, intolerance, and dark suspicion of all the creations of man, but the doctrines of John Calvin, who was born in France and at intervals suffered from biliousness." (Phillips Russell, Emerson: The Wisest American. p. 84.) The distinction between Puritanism and Calvinism should be kept in mind, but one need not accept the biased account given of John Calvin.

every past and particular shining of itself. This light, Calvinism denies in its idolatry of a certain past shining."

(8). It was difficult for him to see any good in the Calvinistic system, so great was his prejudice. He described Calvinism as follows: "Calvinism is the breath of a hot village of Teutonic peasants, exalted to the highest power, their notions of right and wrong, their loves and fears and hatreds, their notions of law and punishment and reward, --- all acute but narrow, ignorant and revengeful, yet devout. Dr. Watts' Hymns are its exponent. I remember that Burnap in the Cambridge Divinity School used to say that Calvinism stood on three legs, --- Dr. Watts' Psalms and Hymns, Milton's Paradise Lost, and the Westminster Catechism, -- or was there not a fourth, King James' translation of the Bible?" (9). The "Enraptured Yankee" thought men still clung to Calvinism because of pride and ignorance. Hence the development of the moral sentiment, combined with the discovery of new truth, should invalidate Calvinism and the Christian religion. In his Journal he stated that the discovery of the theological literature of India and China, containing truth parallel with the Christian truth, discredited the Christian idea of a sole revelation. (10).

8. The Heart of Emerson's Journal, Edited by Bliss Perry.
p. 196.

9. Journal. Vol. 10. p. 242. May 1868.

10. See: Journal. Vol. 9. p. 197. 1859.

But he was not alone in his reaction against orthodox Christianity. Beside those in other lands, there were others in New England who were criticizing the old system and building a new spiritual philosophy. W. H. Furness had published a little book on The Gospels; Alcott had brought forth his Conversations on the Gospels; Sampson Reed published his book, Growth of the Mind. These men, with others who shared a similar view, formed a new school of thought with Channing as their leader. But our main interest is not in this reaction from tradition, but in the Spiritual Outlook of Emerson which resulted from the reaction.

2. Emerson's Theory of the Over-Soul.

Having rejected the traditional forms of Christianity, one so vitally interested in the spiritual must go on to construct an acceptable belief. With sincerity and courage he gave expression to his particular idea of religion. In his early days while still a theological student, he accepted many of the current ideas of Christianity which had at that time in New England been modified by Unitarian liberalism. He soon discarded the orthodox views of Christianity and Unitarianism alike, for they seemed so dull and lifeless. "Religion was not with him something apart, a separate attitude of the mind, or function, but so instant and urgent that it

led him out of the churches, which then seemed to him its tomb." (11). Emerson looked upon the religion of his day as a false religion because it had become detached from the world of science and art, and had become isolated from life itself. So he constructed his own religion based upon an interpretation of the Christian faith, including a combination of other elements selected from numerous sources. His spiritual view encouraged each man to fashion his own particular brand of religion. "Religion has failed! Yes, the religion of another man has failed to save me. But it has saved him." (12). We reiterate the idea of a first-hand religion to give some indication of Emerson's continual emphasis. He believed there should exist an intimate, constant relationship between man and the World-Soul. To this relationship, as it existed in man, he gave the name "Over-Soul." (13).

In the Essay, "The Over-Soul," we find the most detailed account of this relationship between the Divine and man. Outside of this Essay the term "Over-Soul" is seldom used, although the principle for which the term stands is usually

11. Edward Waldo Emerson, Emerson in Concord. p. 247.

12. Journal. Vol. 6. p. 306. 1842.

13. Mr. Carpenter has identified the idea of the "Over-Soul" as Neoplatonic. "It is the theory of spiritual emanation--the theory that, from an Absolute source, the living water (or sometimes the metaphor is that of light) streams down into all creatures below, imparting to them the divine vital energy." (Emerson and Asia. pp. 75-7.) He concludes by saying that the term "Over-Soul" was not taken from the Bhagavat Gîta, but was original with Emerson. However, he says Emerson had the terms "World-Soul" and "Universal Soul" to work with.

assumed. It is not easy to give an exact definition of this term for the Concord Sage was rather indefinite in his explanation. If he had been pressed for a clearer definition, undoubtedly he would have said of the "Over-Soul" as he said of God, "It is beyond explanation." Perhaps we may most simply state the meaning of the term "Over-Soul" by saying that it is the presence of God in man. The "Over-Soul" is a spirit, the spirit of the whole, the spirit which invades all, and of which man and nature are parts. It "is that great nature in which we rest as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere; that Unity, that Over-Soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other." (14). Again, "Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal One." (15). This soul is not an organ, it is not the intellect, it is not the will, but it animates and controls all the capacities of man. It is a soul within and about man, and in all things, and draws all things together into a unity. The term "Over-Soul" is essentially just another name for the power of the indwelling divine spirit in man.

The idea of the immanence of God seemed more significant to him than it did to the orthodox Christian. Returning from

14. Works. II. 268.

15. Ibid. 269.

his first voyage to Europe, he wrote, "Man begins to hear a voice that fills the Heavens and the earth, saying that God is within him. I find this amazing revelation of my immediate relation to God a solution of all the doubts that oppressed me. I recognize the distinction of the outer and inner self; the double consciousness that within this erring, passionate, mortal self sits a supreme, calm, immortal mind, whose power I do not know; but it is stronger than I; it is wiser than I; it never approved me in wrong; I seek counsel of it in my doubts; I repair to it in my dangers; I pray to it in my undertakings. It seems to me the face which the Creator uncovers to his child." (16). While the orthodox Christians looked above and beyond themselves for the solution of life, Emerson urged men to look within themselves. He said the terms "God within" and "God above" were synonyms. (17). But he did not seem to believe the terms were synonyms when he asserted that men would find no peace so long as they continued to depend upon a God outside themselves, instead they must search for God deep within their own natures. (18). Those who turn from the distant and transcendent God and seek God within themselves can be assured of the victory. "When I

16. Hildegarde Hawthorne, Youth's Captain. pp. 83-4. Quoted from the Journals, but no page citation is given.

17. See: Journal. Vol. 3. p. 399. December 21, 1834; also cf. Journal. Vol. 2. p. 225.

18. See; Ibid. Vol. 4. p. 121. October 19, 1836.

cast my look inward and look upon God as mine, I may well defy the future, and looking upon all the rough weather ahead as exercises to try the faith of the combatants, I may merrily predict a victory." (19). Such a victory depended upon the Universal Spirit freely flowing into man's nature. Thus the Universal Spirit or "Over-Soul" ebbs and flows into man as the tides of the ocean ebb and flow upon the shore. Man is pictured as a spirit, being moved by the "Over-Soul" when it invades his nature.

Emerson expressed this spiritual quality of the "Over-Soul" by means of various metaphors. He has called the finite the "foam of the infinite." (20). In another place he spoke of man as a mere tunnel or pipe through which the Divine Will flowed. (21). The human soul was a larger or less emanation from the Infinite Soul. (22). But the figures of speech do not always express his exact meaning. While he spoke of man as a tunnel through which the Divine passed, there are many indications that he looked upon man as a part of the Divine and not merely a tunnel or pipe to be used by the Divine.

However, it is the soul or mind which functions as a

19. Journal. Vol. 3. pp. 521-2.

20. Ibid. Vol. 5. p. 209. May 28, 1839.

21. See: Ibid. Vol. 3. p. 555. October 15, 1835.

22. See: Ibid. Vol. 2. pp. 53-4. February 6, 1825.

constant revelation. (23). At this point one is not certain whether he meant the human soul alone, or the human soul in cooperation with the "Over-Soul"; the latter is probably the case. He said, "We distinguish the announcements of the soul, its manifestations of its own nature, by the term Revelation... Revelation is the disclosure of the soul." (24). The Concord Sage did not deny the revelations of the past, but he believed they were superceded by frequent personal revelations. Of course, the good men of all ages spoke for God, but let us also speak for God in the thought-forms and language of the present day. "I answer, God sends me messengers alway. I am surrounded by messengers of God who show me credentials day by day. Jesus is not solitary, but still a lonely herald." (25). He affirmed that he saw God through no darkened glass, but he saw God face to face every day. He was fond of using the phrase "perpetual revelation." (26). Since the soul was

23. "My own mind is the direct revelation which I have from God and far least liable to mistake in telling his will of any revelation." (Journal. Vol. 2. p. 438. December 19, 1831.)

24. Works. II. 280-1; 282.

25. Journal. Vol. 4. p. 427. April 23, 1838.

26. At the age of 23, before Emerson had departed from the orthodox faith, he saw the difficulty of perpetual revelation. "If God sent revelations daily, none could plead the merit of faith." (Journal. Vol. 2. p. 177. 1827.) But this idea disappeared and never returned to him during his mature years.

continually announcing itself in revelation, he found it convenient to refuse to accept traditional authority. The Bible, the Church and its creeds, and the sacraments he rejected in favor of the announcements of the soul. Mr. Cooke has found Emerson's idea similar to the notion of the Sufis; the Sufis held the theory that God gave His truth through the feelings of men, and thus they were able to disregard all books and formal religion. (27). The Transcendentalist had little respect for external aids; he encouraged men to imbibe God without any medium. The orthodox Christian might describe this position by saying that Emerson simply disposed of God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, and gave an added significance to the third member, God the Holy Spirit.

In all creation The "Enraptured Yankee" saw the revelation of the Universal Soul. He wrote to Mary Moody Emerson: "It were fitter to account every moment of the existence of the Universe as a new Creation, and all as a revelation proceeding each ~~moment~~ from the Divinity to the mind of the observer." (28). He has woven such a close relationship between the "Over-Soul" and the soul, between God and man, that the two are almost indistinguishable. "I behold with awe and delight many illustrations of the One Universal Mind. I see my being

27. See: Emerson, His Life Writings and Philosophy. p. 364. The Concord Sage would have substituted the term "intuition" for the term "feeling."

28. Letters. Vol. 1. p. 174. September 23, 1826.

imbedded in it; as a plant in the earth so I grow in God. I am only a form of him. He is the soul of me. I can even with a mountainous aspiring say, I am God, by transferring my me out of the flimsy and unclean precinct of my body, my fortunes, my private will, and meekly retiring upon the holy austerities of the Just and Loving, upon the secret fountains of nature." (29). Here and elsewhere we see that the line which distinguishes the boundary between God and man can hardly be detected. (30). He declared that man should return to his source and mix with Deity. This advice suggests that one should turn in upon himself and listen to the pronouncements of his own soul.

When Emerson expressed his belief that all was a revelation of God, he did not refer to man alone, but to all nature. The "Over-Soul" and the All is within all. "I believe in the omnipresence; that is, that the All is in each particle; that entire nature reappears in every leaf and moss." (31). The All is in the rules of grammar, in the oyster shops, in a load of bricks, in a barber shop, in mathematics, and even in Churches. That such a belief is partly pantheistic, he did not

29. Journal. Vol. 4. p. 247. May 26, 1837.

30. See: Ibid. Vol. 3. p. 362. November 15, 1834.

31. Ibid. Vol. 5. p. 184. April 11, 1839.

deny, although he seldom used the term "pantheism." (32).

The theory of the "Over-Soul" is based upon the idea of intuition. The Universal Spirit is awakened in man by great flashes of insight bringing confidence and optimism.

"I am enlarged by the access of a great sentiment, of a virtuous impulse. It is the direct income of God." (33).

While the whole structure of Emerson's thought depended upon intuition, one is never quite sure about the content which he gave to the term "intuition." (34). The belief in intuition was the one element which held together the group of men known as the Transcendentalists. There were a number of men contemporary with our author who held ideas similar to the intuitive approach to knowledge. (35). Emerson differed

32. Emerson wrote in his Journal: "Pantheism. In the woods, this afternoon, it seemed plain to me, that most men were Pantheists at heart, say what they might of their theism. No other path is, indeed, open for them to the One, intellectually at least." (Vol. 9. pp. 45-6. 1856.) V. Ramakrishna makes an effort to defend Emerson from the charge of pantheism. "Were it not, on the other hand, more properly described as the 'panentheism' of immanence combined with transcendence, intranaturalism with supernaturalism, all being in God and God being in all but all not being identified absolutely with God or emptying His infinitude?" (Emerson--His Muse and Message. p. 78.)
33. Journal. Vol. 5. p. 248. September 5, 1839; also, see: Ibid. p. 514. January 31, 1841.
34. Emerson often used the following terms interchangeably: "instinct," "enthusiasm," "ecstasy," and "intuition." "Inspiration" had a similar meaning. The "intuitive" action, or the "spontaneous" action was considered the best action.
35. "Intuition became more important than bibles or great teachers. When God speaks directly to each soul, why look backward to the past revelations. These ideas made Furness regard the life of Jesus as perfectly natural,

little from his Transcendentalist friends; however, his style was more impressive than theirs. With unique phrases and dramatic skill he asked the vital question about life and gave the following answer:

What we are? and Whither we tend? We do not wish to be deceived. Here we drift, like white sail across the wild ocean, now bright on the wave, now darkling in the trough of the sea; --- but from what port did we sail? Who knows? Or to what port are we bound? Who knows! There is no one to tell us but such poor weather-tossed mariners as ourselves, whom we speak as we pass, or who have hoisted some signal, or floated to us some letter in a bottle from far. But what know they more than we? They also found themselves on this wondrous sea. No; from the older sailors, nothing. Over all their speaking-trumpets, the gray sea and the loud winds answer, Not in us; not in Time. Where then but in Ourselves, where but in that Thought through which we communicate with absolute nature, and are made aware that whilst we shed the dust of which we are built, grain by grain, till it is all gone, the law which clothes us with humanity remains anew? where but in the intuitions which are vouchsafed us from within, shall we learn the Truth. (36).

Hence the authority of tradition is discarded in favor of

35. continued from page 45."all his acts the expressions of a truly loyal nature. To Alcott they gave the conviction that the uncorrupt mind of the child has all truth in it, ready to be developed. Brownson was led to see in Christianity the natural religion of the soul. Like tendencies of thought induced Emerson to severely criticise all institutional religion, and to abandon every religious rite. He came to regard religion as a universal sentiment, which reveals all truth to each individual soul. This sentiment is awakened by perceiving the universal order of nature and by experience of its variable laws. It leads to a sublime self-trust, and to a repudiation of all commands laid on us from the teachings of other men, unless their thought is verified in our own natures. This sentiment is an intuition, and not to be received at secondhand." (G. W. Cooke, Emerson: His Life Writings and Philosophy. p.66.)
36. Works. I. 287-8.

individual instinct or intuition. Emerson advanced beyond the orthodox position when he stated that the unconscious act was the act of the Universal Soul. (37). He and Alcott agreed that the unconscious and spontaneous acts of children were the clearest expressions of the Universal Soul. (38). Hence, to become like little children, or to allow free expression to the inner self, was to strengthen the relationship between the soul and the "Over-Soul."

Mr. Arthur Christy has suggested that Emerson turned both inward and eastward; and there can be no doubt that he was strongly influenced by the eastern thought, particularly in his theory of the "Over-Soul." The poetry and religious literature of the east stimulated the imagination of the "Enraptured Yankee." At the age of nineteen he copied lines from "Naroyena" which had been translated by Sir William Jones. (39). He continued to enjoy the Oriental literature throughout his life. In a letter to James Elliot Cabot, he

37. See: Journal. Vol. 3. p. 325. August 13, 1834.

38. Modern psychologists do not seem to accept Emerson's theory of the complete goodness of the unconscious mind. The sub-conscious or un-conscious mind appears to be the root of much abnormal and unfortunate action.

39. "Of dew-bespangled leaves and blossoms bright

Hence! vanish from my sight,
Delusive pictures! unsubstantial shews!
My soul absorbed, one only Being knows,
Of all perceptions, one abundant source,
Hence every object, every moment flows,
Suns hence derive their force,
Hence planets learn their course;
But suns and fading world I view no more,
God only I perceive, God only I adore!"
(Journal. Vol. 1. p. 157.)

told of reading the Purana in the mountains of Vermont, and added that there was no theology to be compared with the Bhagavat. (40). His emphasis upon the All, the World Soul, the Unity, or the "Over-Soul" has much in common with the Hindu monism. He often spoke of being absorbed in the "Over-Soul," or the process of mixing with Deity.

In all nations there are minds which incline to dwell in the conception of the fundamental Unity. The raptures of prayer and ecstasy of devotion lose all being in one Being. This tendency finds its highest expression in the religious writings of the East, and chiefly in the Indian Scriptures, in the Vedas, the Bhagavat Geeta, and the Vishnu Purana. Those writings contain little else than this idea, and they rise to pure and sublime strains in celebrating it. (41).

While the theory of the "Over-Soul" is somewhat similar to the ideas found in the Vedanta, yet he departs from the eastern system when he sets forth the principle of law as a basis for his doctrine of self-reliance. (42). It is a matter of conjecture whether he borrowed the Indian doctrine or whether his own thoughts led him to the same doctrine. Nevertheless, he thought he found the root of the idea in all great literature. Our author was convinced that Plato borrowed the idea of the "one deity" from the east as he travelled there. (43).

40. See; Letters. Vol. 3. p. 293.

41. Works. IV. 49.

42. See: Arthur Christy, The Orient in American Transcendentalism. pp. 77-9; p. 96.

43. See; Works. IV. 53-4. The appearance of similar ideas in both east and west has not yet been proved to be the result of direct contact.

He thought he saw the ideas of the east confirmed in all ages; he believed various cultures were carrying on the tradition. But it may not be said that he slavishly followed this system, or any system.

The idea of intuition as the method by which one arrives at knowledge, as well as the method of revelation, is not new, for one may find several sources of this theory which were familiar to the Concord Sage. He was acquainted with Neoplatonism in which he found the doctrine of intuition as the basis of knowledge. Some of the later Neoplatonists taught the unity of all souls in a World Soul. (44). The doctrine of the immanence of God which he found in Plotinus was most acceptable to him. Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas are found throughout his works.

Emerson's theory of intuitive knowledge varies little from the conception of Coleridge. The position of Coleridge has been summarized thus:

It declared that man has innate ideas, and a faculty transcending the senses and the understanding. It identified morality and religion, and made intuition their source. Coleridge calls this transcendent faculty reason, and regarded it as an immediate beholding of supersensible things. He says it can not be called a faculty, and much less a personal property of the human mind. We do not possess it, but partake of it; it is identical with the Universal Reason, a spark from which enters the human mind. (45).

44. See: G. W. Cooke, Emerson: His Life Writings and Philosophy, p. 274.

45. Ibid. pp. 52-3.

One may note the similarity in the following quotation taken from the "Over-Soul",

All goes to show that the soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs; is not a function, like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet; is not a faculty, but a light; is not the intellect or the will, but the master of the intellect and the will; is the background of our being, in which they lie, --- an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed. From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all. (46).

Although Coleridge and Emerson use different terms, they both express the same transcendental idea.

Theodore Parker built his religious structure upon the foundation of intuition. The only noticable difference is that Parker has added a word to the term, calling it "instinctive intuition." (47).

The intuitive element went hand in hand with the doctrine of an immanent God as it has been expressed in the "Over-Soul." We have already considered our author's idea of a God who may be found in everything. Emerson found this idea expressed in Britain by his friend Carlyle. Although the two men differed in spirit and temperament, they each agreed upon the immanent divine presence; both looked upon life as spiritual rather than mechanical. Carlyle called his theory the "Divine Idea

46. Works. II. 270.

47. See: Joseph Cook, Transcendentalism. p. 245.

of the World," for he found the divine expressed in everything. (48). The similarity between the two men may become more apparent if we quote a passage from the works of Carlyle: "It is his way of naming what I here, by other words, am striving imperfectly to name; what there is at present no name for: The unspeakable Divine Significance, full of splendor, of wonder and terror, that lies in the being of every man, of everything, -- the Presence of the God who made every man and thing. Mahomet taught this in his dialect; Odin in his: it is the thing which all thinking hearts, in one dialect or another, are here to teach." (49). The sharing of this idea of the Divine indwelling seems to be the one bond which drew the two men together in lasting friendship.

While the American Transcendentalist found it natural to speak of God as residing within man and all nature, he found it most difficult to speak of the God who is outside and above man. He was always irritated by the traditional phrases used by theologians, particularly the ones which suggested ideas disagreeable to him. He said the conversations of such men almost paganized him. He believed the words "God," "grace," "prayer," "heaven," "hell," and "sin" had lost **their** meanings by too much familiarity; men had acquired the habit of speaking of God as they might speak of Captain

48. See: Joseph Cook, Transcendentalism. p. 245.

49. Carlyle, Heroes, Hero-Worship. Vol. 5. p. 156.



Gulliver. He warned all to say little about God, lest by their much speaking they should become tangled with dogmatic systems, losing the reality of God. "Even Plato and Kant can hardly be trusted to write of God. As soon as one sets out to write in the course of his book of the Divine Mind, the love of System vitiates his perception. He grows a little limitary. The truest account of that Idea would be got by an observation and record of the incidental expressions of the most intelligent men when they speak of God quite simply and without any second thought." (50). A similar expression is found in a letter written to Miss Mary Rocht, a Quaker friend: "For the science of God our language is unexpressive and merely prattle; we need simpler and universal signs, as algebra compared with arithmetic." (51). God is to be considered so great that He can not be limited by any definition; God dazzles all attempts at definition.

So he seldom spoke of God as a transcendent or personal Being. When he spoke of Him, he was often misunderstood, for his expressions were misleading. When he was about twenty years of age he stated that God was infinitely above and separate from the whole creation; as the years passed this idea received less attention. It did not greatly distress him to be unable to give a definition of God; the few attempted

50. Journal. Vol. 5. p. 321. November 13, 1839.

51. James Elliot Cabot, A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Vol. 2. p. 117. This quotation is taken from a letter written by Emerson from Concord, March 28, 1847.

definitions are most impersonal ones. He said, "But is God a person? No. That is a contradiction; the personality of God. A person is finite personality, is finiteness." (52). He thought of God as neither conscious nor self-conscious. He usually spoke of an impersonal God inhabiting the hearts of men and dwelling in the core of nature. Plato's identification of God and Good which Emerson accepted may partly account for this tendency to depersonalize God. He made one attempt to explain his use of the term "impersonal God." "I deny personality to God because it is too little, not too much. Life, personal life, is faint and cold to the energy of God. For Reason and Love and Beauty, or that which is all these, is the life of life, the reason of reason, the love of love." (53). This conception of an impersonal God, in opposition to a personal God, was current among theologians of the nineteenth century who gave a narrow and limited definition to the term "personality." A similar use of the term may be noted in the philosophies of Bradley and Bosanquet who were under the influence of Hegel and Spinoza.

In spite of this single defence, Emerson's notions and expressions of God are impersonal; they do not correspond to the personal God found in the Hebrew tradition or the God of Jesus Christ. The "Enraptured Yankee" spoke of God as,

52. Journal. Vol. 4. p. 185. January 16, 1837.

53. Ibid. Vol. 4. p. 416. March 24, 1837.

"The nameless Thought, the nameless Power, the super-personal Heart." (54). Again, he said, "God the Moral element"; "God is our name for the last generalization to which we can arrive," and "what is God but the name of the Soul at the center by which all things are what they are." (55). He presents a God who is incapable of haste, of loving care, and of memory; this God is fashioned in the image of a cold hard law of compensation. The idea of God as a general principle was expressed by the Stoics; the Stoical influence has caused Emerson to conceive of God as indifferent to the praises or blames of mankind; God deals out equal justice to all with little attempt to express merciful love.

The impersonal God who is presented in the theory of the "Over-Soul" is principally a law, a spiritualized law within man and all nature. The Concord Sage stated that men should live according to their own natures; he meant they should be guided into good action by the law within. He believed the Universal Will should be allowed to operate and possess full power, thus overpowering the individual will. There are times when he spoke of surrendering the self to God. Before he formulated his theory of the "Over-Soul" he

54. Works. VI. 241.

55. Journal. Vol. 6. p. 509; Journal. Vol. 5. p. 5;
Journal. Vol. 2. p. 501.

meant surrender to a personal God. (56). Later, when he spoke of yielding to God, or the Universal Will, he meant a yielding to the Universal Law which is within man and not beyond or outside him. This capitulation to the law of nature within man has a distinct resemblance to Stoicism. (57). Emerson's surrender to the Divine is not to be identified with the Christian submission to God. "I will surrender to the Divine, -- to nothing else; not to Jove, not to ephod or cross." (58). It seems then, his surrender was a surrender to his own theory of the "Over-Soul."

We believe our author was led to formulate the theory of the "Over-Soul" to avoid the unproductive formalism of the second-hand approach to God. His whole endeavor seemed to be a reaction against a Calvinism which had become fruitless. He could no longer accept the Unitarian faith which he held

56. "I am sick -- if I should die what would become of me? I am to give my soul to God and withdraw from sin and the world, the idle or vicious time and thoughts I have sacrificed to them; and let me consider this as a resolution by which I pledge myself to act in all variety of circumstances, and to which I must recur often in times of carelessness and temptation, to measure my conduct by the rule of conscience." (Journal. Vol. 1. pp. 78-9.) At the age of twenty he wrote of the claim of God by the right of creation. (See: Journal. Vol. 1. p. 251.)

57. "Emerson would say as strongly as Epictetus does, that we are to be absolutely resigned to the will of God. We are to have no other thought, no other wish, than to become perfectly obedient to God, accepting his laws, doing his will, becoming the organs through which he acts." (G. W. Cooke, Emerson: His Life Writings and Philosophy. p. 305.)

58. Journal. Vol. 5. p. 223. June 18, 1839.

in his youth, for that too was rapidly decaying. With little care or attention for system or logic, he selected from many sources the ideas which pleased his fancy. He found the idea of the immanence of God in many sources, such as: the Stoics, the Quakers, the Neoplatonists, and certain Christians. He used such sources in his attempt to bring God down from his transcendent throne to live within man and nature. Hence, God was to become an impersonal principle, an inner law. He found support among the German Romanticists for his idea of intuition as the inner voice of authority. He listened to the voices from the east, and his poetic spirit responded to the unity of the World Soul. He saw all individuals involved in the process of becoming One with the Universal Mind and Will. He was able to see in each atom a small replica of the world order. The principle of the "Over-Soul" became the law by which he judged all life. As one considers this "Over-Soul," which he assembled with aid from so many sources, one is tempted to question thus, "Did Emerson follow his own advice and listen to the voice within, or did he listen to the voices of many about the world?"

3. The Moral Nature of Religion.

There are indications that Emerson endeavored to change the Christian religion into a system of ethics. Each individual

was asked to obey the law within, according to his own intuition. Emerson was interested in an impersonal ethic which he believed made theology unnecessary. He did not seem to be particularly interested in human personality, except as it was representative of ethical principles. He said little about the significance of faith in a supernatural Being, for he was mainly interested in human conduct. Emerson's occasional assertion that everything is supernatural differs little from his usual assumption that all is natural. Usually he assumed the identity of morals and religion, but a few instances may be found in which he spoke of religion as the emotion accompanying morals. We shall see how he tried to make a human brother of Christ, and how he tried to make religion natural by his continual emphasis upon the moral sentiment.

a. Humanizing the Person of Christ.

The New England Transcendentalist was nurtured in the Unitarian faith and accepted a large part of the Unitarian teaching about Jesus. The orthodox Christian doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, as a member of the Trinity, he considered a traditional fairy tale. The Jesus of history was an unusual ethical instructor who had no parallel as an influential teacher. (59). He could not understand Jesus

See: Journal. Vol. 6. pp. 438-9. August 25, 1843.

as the Son who came to reveal the Father; he wrote to Miss Emerson, "Jesus Christ was sent to remove the blindness from their minds." (60). He did not look upon Jesus as a unique mediator between man and God; any inspiring teacher might be such a mediator. Jesus came to teach men moral truth, and in his teaching and in the practice of his teaching lay His significance. Mr. Cooke has given an accurate account of Emerson's view of Jesus:

So he regards Jesus as one of those rare spirits, pure and noble, a sublime teacher, 'our best, our dearest saint,' but in no way different from many another inspired soul. He could only reveal the Soul, as others have done, and tell us of its glad power; but we may ourselves have the same vision, because we have the same nature he had. The moment men trust in him they cripple themselves and degrade the soul. The moral sentiment, the gift of intuition, supercedes this teaching, as it does that of every other. (61).

The Concord Sage was not amazed by the fact that Jesus existed, but he was surprised that only one Jesus was to be found in history.

He thought of Christ as a brother, not as the only Son of God; tradition had exaggerated the position of Christ, and it was now time to reject all false reverence. "It is no more according to Plato than according to me. God is in every man. God is in Jesus, but let us not magnify any of the

60. Journal. Vol. 2. p. 175. This is an item from a letter written in 1827, but recorded in the Journal.

61. Emerson: His Life Writings and Philosophy. pp. 370-1.

vehicles, as we magnify the Infinite Law itself." (62).

While Christ preached the greatness of man, his followers have deserted him and preached the greatness of Christ. The central message of Jesus about God, according to Emerson, was that men should look within themselves in order to find God. "Monroe seriously asked what I believed of Jesus and prophets. I said, as so often, that it seemed to me an impiety to be listening to one another, when the pure Heaven was pouring itself into each of us, on the simple condition of obedience. To listen to any second-hand gospel is perdition of the First Gospel. Jesus was Jesus because he refused to listen to another, and listened at home." (63).

Our author expected all men, as brothers of Christ, to go forth and blaze new and sublime paths; he had no respect for copy-mongers. All men were to be "fellow-disciples," "fellow-worshippers," and brothers with Christ. Christ, the Lord, must be given up; Jesus, the brother, should not be revered, but should be respected for his moral teachings.

While Emerson praised the moral quality of the life of Jesus, he did not look upon Him as the "finished gentleman," for the complete gentleman should remind one of all worthy men. He was able to see no cheerfulness, no love of art,

62. Journal. Vol. 3. p. 324. August 10, 1834.

63. Ibid. Vol. 8. p. 532. 1855.

and no spirit of scientific inquiry in the life of Jesus; when he thought of Jesus he was not reminded of Socrates, Laplace, or Shakespeare. (64). Jesus may have represented the moral nature of man, but he did not represent man's intellectual nature. Jesus is seen as a one-sided figure, possessing an inadequate and an incomplete personality. "But he that shall come shall do better. The mind requires a far higher exhibition of character, one which shall make itself good to the senses as well as to the soul; a success to the senses as well as the soul. This was a great Defeat; we demand Victory. More character will convert judge and jury, soldier and king; will rule human and animal and mineral nature; will command irresistibly and blend with the course of Universal Nature." (65). Emerson was neither contented with the well-balanced Socrates, nor with the one-sided and defeated Christ. He said he looked for another to come, however, he did not emphasize the idea of the advent of a new Messiah.

b. Religion is Made Natural.

The "Enraptured Yankee" wished to sever the supernatural beliefs from traditional Christianity; he desired to emphasize what he considered to be the true nature of Christianity, namely: the element of morality. His mission in life was to

64. See: Journal. Vol. 3. p. 518. July 30, 1835.
 65. Ibid. Vol. 6. pp. 188-9. 1842.

make religion natural.

The errors of traditional Christianity as it now exists, the popular faith of many millions, need to be removed to let men see the divine beauty of moral truth. I feel myself pledged, if health and opportunity be granted me, to demonstrate that all necessary truth is its own evidence; that no doctrine of God need appeal to a book; that Christianity is wrongly received by all such as take it for a system of doctrines, -- its stress being upon moral truth; it is a rule of life, not a rule of faith. (66).

He asserted that all life rested upon certain moral principles of which most Christians had only a superficial understanding.

The Concord Sage took it upon himself to free Christianity from the worship of personalities, such as St. Paul and Jesus. All the personalities of Christian history were mere jackstraws to him in comparison with the laws of moral nature. He said, "It is the distinction of Christianity, that it is moral. All that is personal in it is nought. When anyone comes who speaks with better insight into moral nature, he will be the new-gospel; miracle or not; inspired or uninspired, he will be Christ; persons are nothing." (67). He visualized the personality of Christ as receding before the sublimity of the moral law. However, he did not have the approval of all his friends when he gave priority to moral law. (68).

66. Journal. Vol. 3. pp. 159-160. Paris, July 11, 1833.

67. Ibid. Vol. 3. p. 424. December 29, 1834.

68. "Impersonality, Law, Right, Justice, Truth, -- these were the central ideas; but where the Power was in which they inhered, how they were related to one another, what was to give them vitality, -- these questions were

A discrimination is occasionally made between the moral law and the religious sentiment, as the following will show: "But if I violate myself, if I commit a crime, the lightning loiters by the speed of retribution, and every act is not hereafter but instantaneously rewarded according to its quality. Virtue is the adopting of this dictate of the universal mind by the individual will. Character is the habit of this obedience, and Religion is the accompanying emotion, the emotion of reverence which the presence of the universal mind ever excites in the individual." (69). Religion is thus made a by-product of the more important moral sentiment. Emerson was following the example of Kant as he used the terms "moral sentiment" and "religious sentiment" interchangeably. Our author spoke of the "divine will, or the eternal tendency to the good of the whole," which is continuously active in man and atom alike.

The supreme merit is usually given to the moral sentiment as it cooperates with the Universal Will; it is the product

68. continued from page 61.... "almost neglected, and left out of sight. I think that was the deficiency of the Transcendental school; is its deficiency still; is the reason why it has not incorporated itself into a church, and been found equal to compete with orthodoxy. The old Puritanism, whatsoever may have been its blunders, --- whatsoever superstitions may have been mingled with its doctrines, -- did believe in a Person, and did not allow itself to discriminate personality away into laws and ideas." (G. W. Cooke, Emerson: His Life Writings and Philosophy. p. 57. Mr. Cooke has quoted from Bronson Alcott's Conversations, but he has failed to give the page number for this quotation.)

69. Works. X. 197-8.

of vision upon which one may always rely. Other faculties, such as the Imagination, Memory, and Judgment may fail, but the moral sense always remains. Whenever the absolute law or the moral sentiment circulates through man, there is a rapture and an inspiration such as had always accompanied the great religious revivals of the past. Thus he judged all the powerful religious awakenings to be revivals of the moral sentiment.

Emerson would persuade all to drop their religious traditions and live by the moral sentiment alone, for the moral sentiment would guide in the unerring direction. While forms of worship, legends and creeds may decay, the moral sentiment is incorruptible. One may discard all forms, but the moral quality will not be eradicated. "Now the first position I make is that natural religion supplies still all the facts which are disguised under the dogma of popular creeds. The progress of religion is steadily to its identity with morals." (70). All the great victories have been made possible because of moral law. So he urged men to turn from theology, which is but the rhetoric of morals, and embrace the moral intuition. "The cure for false theology is mother-wit. Forget your books and traditions, and obey your moral perceptions at this hour." (71).

70. Works. X. 208.

71. Ibid. VI. 214; cf. Ibid. XI. 478.

For the theological Trinity, Emerson would substitute a moral trinity, the trinity of goodness, beauty, and truth. He would not put his faith in religious creeds, but he would trust in men who possessed moral standards. He saw but one religion in all the world, "the religion of well-doing and daring, men of sturdy truth, men of integrity and feeling for others." (72).

The special attention given to conduct caused him to give less significance to the spiritual element of faith. If one were willing to identify morality and religion, one could agree with one who wrote, "His contribution to our faith, the enlargement and purifying of it, is in the direction of ethics." (73). Emerson does not make any notable contribution to Christian faith. The orthodox Christian is willing to accept the relationship between morals and religion, but he refuses to identify the two.

The faith of Emerson was founded upon what he believed to be the inevitable progress of moral principles; this faith caused him to believe that a new age was about to be born. The rapid changes, which he saw going on all about him, were interpreted as universal progress. "We are in transition, from the worship of the fathers which enshrined the law in a private and personal history, to a worship which recognizes

72. Works. X. 223.

73. John Albee, Remembrances of Emerson. p. 186.

the true eternity of the law, its presence to you and me, its equal energy in what is called brute nature as in what is called sacred. The next age will behold God in the ethical laws."

(74). He looked for the new age to produce a new Church founded upon moral science. Such a Church would be produced by the method of appealing to the moral nature of man. He had great confidence that America should produce the new and pure religion, firmly established upon ethical laws. He wrote in his Journal, "Ethics are thought not to satisfy affection. But all the religion we have is the ethics of one or another holy person." (75). One could afford to be optimistic in his hope for the future if he believed that even the primordial atom was predetermined to secure the moral issues of ultimate right. (76). When the moral sentiment was once stirred, he looked for swords and cannons to be converted into hoes and plows.

4. The Church and its Teaching.

Emerson was educated for the Church and began his career as an Unitarian clergyman. He soon gave up what some believed to be a promising career because he would not serve the

74. Works. X. 222.

75. Journal. Vol. 10. p. 104. June 1865.

76. See: Works. VI. 219.

sacrament of Holy Communion; he would not continue to take part in a sacrament in which he did not believe. The service of Holy Communion was used by him as a point of departure from the Church, but it was only one of the many differences which he maintained. Had he not used this instance to create a crisis, he would have found other opportunities. The conviction that Churches concealed the essential elements of religion continued to grow more strongly year by year. He was thoroughly convinced that a first-hand religion would best flourish upon the ruins of the orthodox Christian faith. Throughout most of his life he showed little interest in the Church and rarely attended once he had settled in Concord. While visiting Washington D. C., he attended Church with Seward, and remarked to Seward that he was not much accustomed to Churches. (77)., However, we are told that near the end of his life he began again to attend public worship. He not only had little interest in the Church, but he believed the day of the orthodox Church had gone. (78). This is not to

77. See: Journal, Vol. 9. pp. 385-6. 1862.

78. "Isaac Hecker, the Catholic Priest, came to see me and desired to read lectures on the Catholic Church in Concord. I told him that nobody would come to hear him, such was the aversion of people, at present, to the theological questions; and not only so, but the drifting of the human mind was now quite in another direction than to churches. Nor could I possibly affect the smallest interest in anything that regarded his church. We are used to this whim of a man's choosing to put on and wear a painted petticoat, as we are to whims of artists who wear a medieval cap or beard, and attach importance to it." (Journal, Vol. 9. p. 467. 1862.)

say that he had no appreciation for the service which the Church had contributed in the past. "Be not betrayed into undervaluing the churches which annoy you by their bigoted claims. They too were real churches. They answered to their times the same need as your rejection of them does to ours."

(79). Since he sincerely believed the Church had ceased to fulfil its purpose, he did all in his mental power to hasten the day of its extinction.

Many are the criticisms which he hurled at the Church and its various organizations. Seldom did he speak of the ideal Church which the actual Church so inadequately represents. He saw the forms, creeds, and superstitions of the Church as heavy yokes upon the neck. Sunday Schools and Churches were dull and gloomy places. "And why drag this dead weight of a Sunday-School over the whole Christendom. It is natural and beautiful that childhood should inquire and maturity should teach; but it is time enough to answer questions when they are asked. Do not shut up the young people against their will in a pew and force the children to ask them questions for an hour against their will." (80). The average Church was a bigoted institution which taught the poorest philosophy; it contained too much tradition and made too much of Christ. Time was too precious to be wasted in Churches where the hungry were no longer fed. If one were

79. Works. X. 227.

80. Works. II. 136.

truly in search of a respectable theology, one should do well to avoid the Church. (81). Rarely had he heard the real depth and quality of spiritual law expressed from the pulpit. He said he did not really object to the Church being called the house of God, but were not good judgment, wit, and wise men also institutions and God's houses, and they were far older than the Church. (82). Emerson agreed with Pillsbury, who remarked that such things as the Church and Whiggism should be laughed down.

While the Concord Sage saw little value in the average Church, he still believed the Sabbath was an important day. He called the Sabbath "a frankincense out of sacred antiquity." He loved his Sunday mornings which brought the freedom and opportunity to relax. The Sabbath was painfully consecrated because the rest of the days of the week were not consecrated by men's action. He suggested that Sunday be used for a day of self-analysis, and hoped that one day of the week could be reserved for special meditation.

The Church was insignificant and useless to him; but he

81. "You must not go to the sermons in the churches for the true theology, but talk with artists, naturalists, and other thoughtful men who are interested in virtues, and note how the idea of God lies in their minds. Not the less how the sentiment of duty and impulse of virtue lies in the heart of the 'bobbin-woman,' of any unspoiled daughter or matron in the farmhouse; these are the crucial experiments; these the wells where the coy truth lies hid."

(Journal, Vol. 9. pp. 521-2. 1863.)

82. See: Journal, Vol. 8. p. 560. 1855; also Ibid. Vol. 10. p. 380. 1872.

had even less regard for sectarianism whose practices he continually condemned. As sectarianism advanced it gave a sure indication of the decay of religion, for it was nothing but the ignorance of the knowledge of God. The sects were merely devices which kept men from thinking. The relationship between God and man should be more intimate and should conform to no historical pattern. "I suppose it is not wise, not being natural, to belong to any religious party. In the Bible you are not directed to be a Unitarian, or a Calvinist, or an Episcopalian. Now if a man is wise, he will not only not profess himself to be a Unitarian, but he will say to himself, I am not a member of that or of any party. I am God's child, a disciple of Christ, or, in the eye of God, a fellow disciple with Christ." (83). Emerson was certain that God would build his temples in the heart upon the ruins of Churches and all second-hand religions.

Yet here again, he did not altogether deny the values which have come from the sects of the past. In one place Emerson spoke of the wholesomeness of Calvinism for the mass of people; he gives the impression that the mass was incapable of experiencing his own deeply spiritual faith. (84). Although he could not respond to Calvinism, he believed history could show that many peasants and "Paddies" had benefited from it. There were moments when his poetic nature responded to the

83. Journal, Vol. 2. pp. 385-6. June 20, 1831.

84. See: Ibid. Vol. 3. p. 198. At Sea, September 8, 1833.

elaborate rituals of the Anglican and Catholic Churches, although such moments are unusual. (85). On one occasion he wrote to Margaret Fuller, "This morning I went to the Cathedral to hear mass with much content. It is so dignified to come where the priest is nothing, and the people nothing, and an idea for once excludes these impertinences. The chanting priest, the pictured walls, the lighted altar, the surpliced boys and swinging censer every whiff of which I inhaled; it brought all Rome again to mind. And Rome can smell so far! It is a dear old church, the Roman I mean, and today I detest the Unitarians and Martin Luther and all the parliament of Barebones." (86). This is an unusual expression of appreciation for form and ritual, for it was his custom to condemn such practices. (87).

The Concord Sage did not believe in emphasizing the differences to be found among the various denominations and religions of the world; he thought they all expressed the same general truths in their various creeds and forms. He called upon men to emphasize the agreements. He was convinced

85. "The merits ~~gl~~aimed for the Anglican Church is, that if you let it alone, it will let you alone. It moves through a Zodiack of feasts, and has dearly coupled itself with the almanac." (Journal, Vol. 6. p. 368. February 1853.)

86. Letters, Vol. 3. p. 116. Written January 7 and 8, 1848.

87. When Alcott told Emerson that Mr. Hedge was writing an essay on liturgy, Emerson threatened to write an essay on the importance of a rattle in the throat. (See: Journal, Vol. 8. p. 414. 1853.)

that if all the great religious leaders of the world, such as Buddha, Mohamet, Epicurus, Confucius, and Christ could meet, talk over their ideas, and understand each other, there would be a common agreement. In the mythologies of all religions he found the same truths expressed. In the light of such a belief, he encouraged a universal fellowship in which there would be unity. (88). He found the World-Soul expressing itself in all creation, and hence the truth was repeated in all lands:

Twice I have moulded an image,
And thrice outstretched my hand,
Made one of day and one of night
And one of the salt sea-sand.

One in a Judaeen manger,
And one by Avon stream,
One over against the mouths of Nile,
And one in the Academe. (89).

Thus nature has produced such perfect men as Jesus, Shakespeare, Plotinus, and Plato. By emphasizing the unity of all religions, the clergymen might draw all people together and form a universal Church which would be free from all differences.

As a whole, the clergymen were a disappointment to him, but he was conscious of the benefit they might exert in a community as an example for doing good. While he claimed he

88. V. Ramakrishna is right when he sees in Emerson a "synthesis-loving eclectic." We do not agree with Ramakrishna or Emerson that a complete unity can be made without destroying some distinctions in thought which need to be kept. (See: Emerson: His Muse and Message, p. 83.)

89. Works. IX. 246.

disliked preachers and preaching, he may be said to have preached all his life, not from a pulpit but from the Chautauqua platform. The clergymen were too restricted by the Church, and he liked his freedom; in the face of any restriction he revolted.

I hate preaching, whether in pulpits or in teachers' meetings. Preaching is a pledge, and I wish to say what I think and feel today, with the proviso that tomorrow perhaps I shall contradict it all. Freedom boundless I wish. I will not pledge myself not to drink wine, not to drink ink, not to lie, and not to commit adultery, lest I hanker tomorrow to do these very things by reason of having tied my hands.
(90)

Many clergymen appeared to him to be self-appointed policemen for God, spying out for all rebels. Some of them he found to be insincere and not the victims of the faith which they preached. Others he found repeating the same old parables over and over again without ever seeing the significance of the stories which they told. He looked upon them as thrifty housewives, heating up stale pies to keep them from decay. "A preacher is a bully: I who have preached so much, -- by the help of God will never preach more." (91). But the "Enraptured Yankee" found it difficult to keep this pledge.

He could not refrain from expressing the revelations which seemed to come to him daily, making an historical revelation insignificant. Most of his life he gave little

90. Journal, Vol. 5. pp. 252-3. September 14, 1839. Also cf. Vol. 4. pp. 491-2. June 23, 1838.

91. Ibid. Vol. 6. p. 363. March 23, 1843.

attention to the orthodox Bible. (92). He believed the valuable portions of the Bible should be preserved because of their poetic expressions, and cited such examples as the Psalms and the Gospels. Such writings would endure because the writers knew how to express themselves. He did not wonder that the Bible existed, but he was surprised that there were not a thousand Bibles.

The note of authority which was to be found in the Bible exasperated him.

It should be easy to say what I have always felt, that Stanley's Lives of the Philosophers, or Marcus Antonius, are agreeable and suggestive books to me, whilst St. Paul or St. John are not, and I should never think of taking up these to start me on my task, as I often have used Plato or Plutarch. It is because the Bible wears black cloth. It comes with a certain official claim against which the mind revolts. The book has its own nobilities --- might well be charming, if it was left simply on its merits, as the others; but this 'you must,' -- 'it is your duty,' repels. (93).

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92. Emerson replied to the Reverend Henry Ware, whom he assisted in a Boston Church, "I consider them as the true record of the Revelation which established what was almost all we wanted to know, namely the Immortality of the Soul-- and then, what was of infinite importance after that was settled, the being and Character of God. With the revelation, we have very strong evidence of this Immortality in Natural Religion but without it very insufficient. I look at this book as of divine authority and sh'd lose a great deal more than I () spare, If I lost this faith." (The parentheses indicate an illegible word in the manuscript. Letters, Vol. 1. p. 273.) This acceptance of the authority of the Bible can not be found in any of Emerson's later writings.
93. Journal, Vol. 10. pp. 101-2. 1865.

So he seldom read the Bible; when he turned to it, he read with little care. The Greek and Hebrew languages demanded a discipline he was not willing to give. This was not only true of the Bible, but of all classical literature which he perused. He thought the antiquity of its origin veiled much of its real meaning. It is not surprising that he did not understand the Bible or have an adequate faith in the Christian doctrine. (94).

There was one thing he would not tolerate, a closed Bible which suggested a closed revelation. God often spoke to men in the past, and He continued to speak; not until the last great man had been born would the Bible be closed. So he suggested that men make their own Bibles by collecting ideas from all famous men, such as Paul, John, Seneca, Shakespeare, and others. In the term "Bible" he would include all the significant ethical revelations from all ages and all lands. He would not accept any narrow or provincial record in his Bible; the "sophistical Paul," and such books as, Ruth and

94. Father Taylor, a Methodist preacher to the sailors in Boston, said after hearing a Transcendental sermon, "It would take as many sermons like that to convert a human soul as it would quarts of skimmed milk to make a man drunk." But of Emerson he said to Governor Andrew: 'Mr. Emerson is one of the sweetest creatures God ever made; there is a screw loose somewhere in the machinery, yet I cannot tell where it is, for I never heard it jar. He must go to heaven when he dies, for if he went to hell the devil would not know what to do with him. But he knows no more of the religion of the New Testament than Balaam's ass did of the principles of the Hebrew grammar.'" (James Elliot Cabot, A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Vol. 1. p. 328. This quotation was given by Mrs. E. D. Cheney at the Memorial Meeting held in Concord, July 28, 1884.)

Esther in the Old Testament would be eliminated. (95). Such a Bible should dwarf all existing epics and philosophies, would carry its own validity, and not need the authority of the Church.

Emerson's radical idea of the Bible is paralleled by an equally unorthodox view of prayer. A few early records may be found in the Journal in which he expressed the orthodox belief in prayer. The clearest expression of this early view is to be found under the date of January 19, 1823, when he was nineteen years of age. "But there is a Mind to whom all their greatness is vanity and nothing; who did himself create and communicate all the intellect that exists; and there is a mode of intercourse provided by which we can approach this excellent majesty. That Mind is God; and that Mode is Prayer." (96). But the orthodox view of prayer was soon given up, and we are told he ceased to pray regularly. There is some evidence that he continued to look upon prayer as an aid, at least for a few people. (97).

The corporate prayers of the Church seemed to him to be too general to be of any value for the individual. The habit of private prayer so often degenerated into selfish petition; he considered the practice of such private prayer as foolishness. The Quakers seemed to promote good manners by their

95. See: Journal, Vol. 6. p. 425. July 16, 1843.

96. Ibid. Vol. 2. p. 216. Other similar expressions may be found in the following records, written at an early date: Journal, Vol. 1. pp. 72-80; Vol. 2. p. 270.

97. "He liked that everybody should go to church but himself,

practice of silent grace before meals. In spite of this low regard for most prayers, he was sorry to see family worship disappearing.

Fifty of a hundred years ago, prayers were said, morning and evening, in all families; grace was said at table; an exact observance of the Sunday was kept in the houses of laymen as of clergymen. And one sees with some pain the disuse of rites so charged with humanity and aspiration. But it by no means follows, because those offices are much disused, that the men and women are irreligious; certainly not that they have less integrity or sentiment, but only, let us hope, that they see that they can omit the form without loss of real ground; perhaps that they find some violence, some cramping of their freedom of thought, in the constant recurrence of the form. (98).

Although the form of prayer should be dropped, he hoped men would continue to unite themselves with the Universal Law by means of less formal thought and action.

While Emerson may have possessed some regard for the spirit of prayer, he had little respect for the average prayer

97. continued from page 75... "as aunt Mary Emerson liked that other people should be Calvinists; and a special motive -- the appeal of some unpopular body like the Free Religious Association -- was needed to bring him out on the side of innovation. A good instance of this unconscious drift transpired from the Board of Harvard Overseers, on the occasion of a motion to dispense with the compulsory attendance at morning prayers in the college; which, it was understood, would have prevailed but for Emerson's vote. He should be loath, he is reported to have said, that the young men should not have the opportunity afforded them, each day, of assuming the noblest attitude man is capable, of -- that of prayer." (James Elliot Cabot, A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Vol. 2. p. 248.)

98. Works. X. 107.

of the orthodox Christian. Occasionally he spoke of prayer as unphilosophical and even absurd in the light of science. He has expressed the view that prayer is nonsensical, although perhaps rather "educative nonsense." Let a man earnestly pray to himself and his prayer will be answered. In most cases, prayer seemed to him to be an indication that a man lacked confidence in himself. "As men's prayers are a disease of the will, so are their creeds a disease of the intellect." (99). Prayers might possess a subjective value, but they had no objective value. "Prayer is the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view. It is the soliloquy of a beholding and jubilant soul. It is the spirit of God pronouncing his works good." (100). Thus prayer is the Over-Soul in man speaking to itself, encouraging itself, working up a spirit of self-reliance. Regardless of these brave words against the prayers of the orthodox, he was hesitant to encourage the disuse of prayer altogether.

The same uncertainty prevailed in his outlook upon death and immortality; he believed they were mysteries which man was incapable of understanding. Great men, such as Plato and Socrates seemed to have no fear of death. (101). In his early

99. Works. II. 79.

100. Works. II. 77.

101. Mr. Cooke quotes from a newspaper report of one of Emerson's lectures delivered at Boston in 1866, under the title, "The Philosophy of the People," to the effect that those familiar with Plato, Plutarch, Seneca, Kant, Shakespeare, and Wordsworth, will not ask silly questions about death and immortality. Men of genius have no fear of death. (Emerson, His Life Writings and Philosophy, p. 357.) This idea may be compared with the idea of death as it is found in the last sections of Plato's Apology.

years he said that a man's view of death depended upon his views about the character and will of God. Several events occurred in the early years of his life which one would have expected to have turned his mind to a serious consideration of the problem of death. His first wife died about a year after they were married; at the age of 38 he lost his only son born to his second wife, although another son was to be born later. At the time of the loss of his son he wrote in his Journal: "I comprehend nothing of this fact but its bitterness. Explanation I have none, consolation I have none that rises out of the fact itself; only diversion; only oblivion of this, and pursuit of new objects." (102). He never had an understanding of the fact of death; he seemed to have no faith that could bring comfort and consolation to others.

While Emerson began his ministry with faith in immortality for the individual, the orthodox view faded with the passing years. (103). At the age of seventeen, he believed

102. Journal, Vol. 6. p. 166. 1842.

103. Mr. Christy's analysis of Emerson's view of immortality is accurate, and the citations are valid at this point. "His belief in personal immortality waned as did his belief in a personal God. At the age of twenty four he felt himself immortal. His Journal demonstrates this: 'I believe myself immortal. The beam of the balance trembles, to be sure, but settles away on the right side. For otherwise all things look so silly.' (Journal, Vol. 2. p. 211.) But as the years advance his certitude fades. In the Essay on "Immortality" he experiences difficulty in finding a place for personal immortality in his system. 'I confess that everything connected with our personality fails. Nature never spares the individual.'" Works. VII. 342-3. (The Orient in American Transcendentalism, p. 111.)

that rewards in the after-life would be given in a system of gradation. He then based his argument not upon reason, but upon feeling. Evidence can be produced to show that all his life he was rather uncertain about his view of immortality. Addressing an assembly at the Consecration of Sleepy Hollow Cemetary, he said, "Life is not long enough for art, nor long enough for friendship. The evidence from intellect is as valid as the evidence from love. The being that can share a thought and feeling so sublime as confidence in truth is no mushroom. Our dissatisfaction with any other solution is the blazing evidence of immortality." (104). This would suggest an immortality in which personalities are kept intact. The same suggestion is given by him in the poem, "Threnody", which was written a few days after the death of his son. But this view is not consistently maintained for long. At the age of fifty nine, when he said he believed in life everlasting, it is no longer the orthodox view of immortality. It may be said that he had no carefully constructed view of immortality, but seemed to wander among several views.

The idea that men get their rewards day by day in life is the view most consistently expressed. He looked upon the present world as the important part of man's paradise. "God brings us by ways we know not and like not into paradise." (105)

104. Works. XI. 436.

105. Journal, Vol. 3. p. 316. November 30, 1834.

This idea seemed to fit his emphasis upon the "everlasting now." Men were capable of making the moment great, of living vitally and fully in the present; they were to let the future care for itself, since it was in the hands of nature. The continual upward march of man and all nature seemed to depend upon the Universal Will becoming expressed within man. "Our thought is the income of God. I taste therefore of eternity and pronounce of eternal law now, and not here-after. Space and time are but forms of thought. I proceed from God now, and ever shall so proceed. Death is but an appearance. Yes, and life's circumstances are but an appearance through which the firm virtue of this God -- law penetrates and which it moulds." (106). He was so preoccupied with the "everlasting now" that he evaded the problem of death by calling it an appearance.

Along with this belief in the "everlasting now," he toyed with the idea of transmigration. He was attracted to the idea as he found it expressed in the poetry of Wordsworth and in the mythologies of India. The idea of transmigration he could fit into his idea of compensation, and thus the view found an easy entrance into his mind. He believed he saw the idea suggested in the life and manners of insects as well as in the life of man. "Transmigration of Souls; that too is no fable." (107). Many examples are to be found in his more

106. Journal, Vol. 4. pp. 453-4. May 14, 1838.

107. Ibid. Vol. 5. p. 444. July 26, 1840.

poetic expressions.

Life itself is an interim and a transition; this, O Idur, is my one and twenty thousandth form, and already I feel the old Life sprouting underneath in the twenty thousandth and first, and I know well that he builds no new world but by tearing down the old for materials. (108).

Oliver Wendell Holmes looked upon these expressions as the product of reverie and imagination, being the expression of his earlier thought. Mr. Christy suggests that Emerson played both humorously and seriously with the idea of transmigration, and believes it was more than just a metaphor. (109). One may reasonably ask how often it is possible to play with an idea and still be completely free from its influence?

The Concord Sage finally gave up the Christian idea of a personal immortality in favor of the idea of absorption. Everything exists always, but not personal consciousness. Personality will be lost when one becomes One with the Universal. A record in the Journal bears evidence of the Indian influence.

There prevailed anciently the opinion that the human mind was a portion of the Divinity, separated for a time from the infinite mind, and when life was closed, reabsorbed into the Soul of the world; or, as it was presented by a lively image, Death was but the breaking of a vial of water in the ocean. But this portion of the Divine mind in childhood and youth they thought was yet pure as

108. Journal, Vol. 6. pp. 419-20. 1843.

109. The Orient in American Transcendentalism, p. 105; also p. 112.

it came from God and yet untainted by the impurities of this world. There was much of truth in the beautiful theory. (110).

It is evident that Wordsworth and Emerson were influenced by the same general idea. Later, Emerson was to write in agreement with the preceding quotation, "I believe I shall sometime cease to be an individual, that the eternal tendency of the soul is to become Universal, to animate the last extremities of organization." (111). This process of absorption may be brought about by man entering deeper and deeper into God, and God entering more deeply into man until the last trace of egotism has disappeared. Thus man is with God, is God, and shares His will.

But in the meantime the Kingdom of God is being established upon earth. Emerson wrote to his friend, Charles King Newcomb, to persuade him to come and live in Concord and become part of a fellowship which he hoped to gather about him: "Those of us who do not believe in Communities, believe in neighborhoods and that the kingdom of heaven may consist of such." (112). By "Communities" he had reference to the socialistic schemes fostered by Alcott and others. There was an abundant optimism in his outlook upon the future progress of man and society,

110. Journal, Vol. 2. p. 217. 1827.

111. Ibid. Vol. 4. p. 287. August 21, 1837.

112. Letters, Vol. 3. p. 51. May 7 and 8, 1842.

particularly as he saw the American situation. The nations of the globe were soon to be brought together; the sufferings of vast masses of people were to be relieved. The moral sentiment would awaken and peace be assured. He believed America would have a new faith whose service would be devoted to mankind. The voice within was to be the Bible of this new faith. The laws of nature were to serve as its commandments, and the moral sentiment was to be its gospel. A new Church was to be established upon moral science, and justice and self-devotion was to rule. America would prove itself to be the great charity of God, God's great gift to the human race.

We have suggested several ways in which the spiritual outlook of Emerson has departed from the orthodox Christian view. The Christian view of God was a part of his heritage, but we suggest his spiritual outlook was hardly Christian, and grew less Christian as the years passed. The secondary sources seem to provide a divided opinion. (113). Briefly, let us see what he has done with the Christian outlook. For

113. Both G. W. Cooke and Dillaway seem to conclude that Emerson was an unorthodox Christian. (See: Emerson, His Life Writings and Philosophy, pp. 361-2; and Prophet of America, p. 328.) Robert Gay says, "This belief is certainly not orthodox and only by a too literal use of the terms can it be called Christian." (Emerson, p. 14.) When Emerson was to speak in England, the "Manchester Courier," and the "Nottinghamshire Guardian," contained articles protesting against this man Emerson, for he would corrupt men's faith. (See: Townsend Scudder, The Lonely Wayfaring Man, p. 96.) The writer can in no sense call the expressed views of Emerson Christian. Emerson lived upon the Christian moral tradition, but he did not hold or express the Christian faith.

the personal God of Jesus Christ he has substituted an impersonal law. The supreme place has been temporarily reserved for Socrates and not for Christ; principles have been substituted for persons. Instead of a Supernatural religion, the natural has been emphasized. The inner voice of intuition has crowded out the Biblical revelation. The great soliloquy has taken the place of prayer. Ethics, or the moral sentiment, has usurped the place of belief; the gospel of works has been preached rather than the gospel of faith. The kingdom on earth has been emphasized at the expense of the Kingdom of Heaven. Instead of personal immortality there is to be an absorption into the Universal Mind. One should need to be Emersonian in his use of terms in order to label this a Christian outlook.

CHAPTER THREE

T H E U N I Q U E I N D I V I D U A L

Man is continually at the center of Emerson's thought, and in this respect he may be identified with the humanistic tradition. Many wonderful things are said about man and his native capacities. The "Enraptured Yankee" has found so many spiritual qualities in man that it would be no exaggeration to say that man has been spiritualized. He has made man the possessor of those qualities which the Christian usually considers to belong to God alone. Emerson tried to convince all men of their inherent greatness, and he often succeeded in his effort, thus bringing to his listeners a feeling of elation. He saw man as an interesting creature with a will, an imagination, a conscience, and an abiding hope. Man is a unique creature with golden possibilities; man is all; he makes his own world since the mind of man is the creator of the world. And yet this unique creature is closely related to all nature; man is related to the fish, the muskrat, and all the lower orders of life. Emerson was pleased that man did not possess the detailed historical record of his own aboriginal state and growth. (1). Nevertheless, this unique man is the end of nature, and in this unique man abides a

1. "They combed his mane, they pared his nails, cut off his tail, set him on end, sent him to school and made him pay taxes, before he could begin to write his sad

golden possibility if he permits reason or intuition to take full control of his life.

1. The Individual Worth of Man.

It is hardly possible to exaggerate the significance which Emerson gave to the individual man. "A man is a god in ruins." (2). "The world is nothing, the man is all." (3). He believed that Jesus understood the true worth of man and took the idea of the greatness of the individual as His central theme. "If Jesus came now into the world, he would say, You, Y.O.U! He said to his age, I." (4). What a pity that men should follow after Jesus when they had such great worth in themselves, and might be more like Him if they aped Him less. (5). He affirmed, "A man is the word made flesh." (6).

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1. continued from page 85.... "story for the compassion or the repudiation of his descendents." (Works. VIII. 270.)
 2. Works. I. 71.
 3. Ibid. I. 114.
 4. Journal, Vol. 4. p. 277. August 14, 1837; also Vol. 5. p. 478. October 18, 1840.
 5. "Why goest thou boswellizing this saint or that? It is lèse-majesté, it is the razor to the throat: here art thou, with whom so long the universe travailed in labor. Darest thou to think meanly of thyself -- thee whom the stalwart Fate brought forth to unite his ragged sides; to shoot the gulf; to reconcile the erst irreconcilable? As long as thou magnifiest anything, thou accusest thyself of trifling, of dallying and postponing thy own deed, for, when once thou graspest the handles of thy plough, thou wilt put all names behind thee as living nature forces us to put all dead bodies under ground." (Journal, Vol. 5. pp. 555-6. 1841.) We are told that farmers, mechanics,

Thus each man is the incarnate word of God. He felt such an immense background in his own nature, assumed the same to be true of each man's nature, and decided he would treat all men as Empire treats Empire, or as God treats God. (7). On various occasions he spoke of the significant qualities to be found in wise men. (8). But according to his theory, any man could be wise who would listen to, and obey the inner voice of reason. Since most individuals felt they were following the Universal Will, they were stimulated to feel important in their own sights. It does not take much effort to convince

5. continued from page 86... and all types of workers departed from the lectures of Emerson feeling they were God's gifts to the world. Although they could not always understand what he really meant, they felt greater and better since they had heard Emerson. He was fond of illustrating his belief about life with the following story, probably taken from Shakespeare: An insensible and drunken sot picked from the gutter is washed and cleaned and put to bed in a Duke's home. Upon awakening, he finds himself in the surroundings of a Prince and believes himself to be a true Prince. (See: Works. II. 62.)
6. Works. II. 76.
7. See; Journal, Vol. 4. p. 16. February 1836.
8. "The wise man -- He needs no library, for he has not done thinking; no church, for he is himself a prophet; no statute book, for he hath the Law-giver; no money, for he is value itself; no road, for he is at home where he is; no experience, for the life of the Creator shoots through him, and from him animates brute things and turns them immediately to their desired ends. He has no personal friends, for he does not need to husband and educate a few to share with him a select and poetic life, who has the spell to draw the select prayer and piety of all men unto him. His relation to all men is angelic. His memory is myrrh to them, his presence frankincense and flowers." (Journal, Vol. 5. p. 361. December 26, 1839.) Emerson would undoubtedly make a distinction between the wise man and the foolish man, but he did not always give his hearers a dependable basis for judging themselves.

men that they are a part of the divine. This was the foundation upon which the Concord Sage built his belief about man. Each man was a divine individual, an island inviolate, a new creation.

In the process of developing his individualism it was natural for him to emphasize the new, the unique, and the unusual. Something new and different should be achieved by each man. He said, "The way, the thought, the good, shall be wholly strange and new. It shall exclude example and experience." (9). He urged men to break the monotony of life by doing strange and extravagant deeds. In this respect man may emulate the divine who never quotes, but always creates. Emerson pursued this idea of the novel to such an extent that he made novelty the test of the highest power. Each man as a new Adam is sent in search of the unique, he is sent to live according to his own nature and not according to the traditional standards of society.

This emphasis upon the individual caused him to have less regard for the social welfare of the mass of people. While he was conscious that men ought to live together in some degree of harmony, he was not interested in the organization of society. The mass of people never think, they are animal and resemble the ape and the chimpanzee.

Masses are rude, lame, unmade, pernicious in their demands and influence, and need not to be flattered

but to be schooled. I wish not to concede anything to them, but to tame, drill, divide and break them up, and draw individuals out of them. The worst of charity is that the lives you are asked to preserve are not worth preserving. Masses! the calamity is the masses. I do not wish any mass at all, but honest men only, lovely, sweet, accomplished women only, and no shovel-handed, narrow-brained, gin-drinking million stockingers or lazzaroni at all. (10).

He did not like crowds and was simply not at home in society. Carlyle said that Emerson was usually quiet at the London dinner-tables and had little to say to "the high people." (11). Individuals were to use society for their own advancement, men were to use society but not serve it. (12). Each individual was expected to develop his own particular power, and in the process must necessarily become a non-conformist. The social life demanded a surrender of some liberty which the individual possessed, and such a surrender was not pleasing to Emerson. He chose to live in the small village of Concord where he could do as he pleased; the ways of life in the city served as a conspirator against the individual. He possessed a rousseauistic hate for all man-made organizations which hindered the full expression of the individual. Emerson was in full agreement with the "one-man revolution" which has since been expressed by Robert Frost.

10. Works. VI. 249.

11. Wilson: Carlyle at His Zenith, p. 41.

12. See: Journal, Vol. 4. p. 474. June 13, 1838.

2. The Self-Reliant Man.

The emphasis upon the unique individual prepared the way for the idea of self-reliance which was a major emphasis in his system of thought. "Trust yourself," he repeated over and over again in his Journal and in his Lectures. Trust yourself, do your duty, and fear no evil. He believed he found this to be the central doctrine among Greeks and Romans. (13). He asked men to trust their own thoughts and judgments against the opinions of the wise man or the multitude. The only true economy was to rely upon one's own judgment: the only true voice of life came from the genius within man. The real verdict comes from the inner man, and it is this verdict which will constitute the new religion. He was in perfect agreement with the Stoic maxim which advised obedience to the voice within one's nature. The assertion has been made that the whole of religion may be found in self-reliance. (14). Of course this is in direct opposition to the Christian's doctrine of reliance upon God.

When he said that a man was self-reliant as he was true to his own highest nature, he did not mean that a man should obey his own individual whim or his lower reason. Only as a man came into contact with the Over-Soul could he trust his

13. See: Journal, Vol. 8. p. 575. 1855.

14. See: Letters, Vol. 1. p. 433. Letter to Benjamin Peter-Hunt. Concord. January 23, 1835.

inner direction. He was proud of the self-made man who worked in cooperation with the All, while he scorned the self-made man who did not work hand in hand with the Over-Soul. (15). The inner voice of reason, the intuition, the will of man, or whatever term may be used to describe this intuitive approach to knowledge, was a product of cooperation between man and the Universal Will. Some, such as Dillaway, Cooke, and others, have suggested that by self-reliance Emerson meant reliance upon God. In one of his Essays, he said, "self-reliance, the height and perfection of man, is reliance upon God." (16). His idea of self-reliance was related to the work of the Universal in the individual man. But it is entirely false to conclude that he meant by the term "God" what the Christian means by the term. The Concord Sage meant that one was to give full trust to the self which is united with the Universal Law. This Universal Law was an impersonal power which was more closely related to the Stoic than to the Christian faith. The self-reliance which Emerson emphasized is not to be confused with or equated with the Christian reliance upon God.

The New England Transcendentalist preached self-reliance

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15. "Henry Clapp said that Rev. Dr. O..... was always looking about to see if there was not a vacancy in the Trinity. He said that Greely knew that he was a self-made man, and was always glorifying his maker. He said that T..... aimed at nothing, and always hit it exactly." (Journal, Vol. 10. p. 239. 1868.)
16. Works. XI. 236.

and the duty to obey the demands of the inner self. The inner reason often brought to him the command to be passive. The emphasis upon passiveness and the grim struggle to keep the emotions under control are to be found in Emerson and Stoic alike. However, Emerson has also emphasized the opposite element, namely: action and power. Both elements are to be found in the Christian doctrine. But the Concord Sage gave less attention to the Christian virtues of love and passion. In spite of his twin emphases upon action and passivity, he is more Stoical than Christian. It was his nature to be passive in his own attitude toward life. Instead of entering into action, he often considered it his duty to be strolling in the woods or wandering about in his garden. This natural inclination led him to emphasize the doctrine of "being" more and "doing" less. Perhaps the doctrine may contain an element of rationalization. He wrote in his Journal, "The chief good of life seems --- this morning --- to be born with a cheerful, happy temper, and well adjusted to the tone of the human race: for such a man feels himself in harmony of things, and conscious of an infinite strength. He need not do anything. But if he is not well mixed and averaged, then he needs to achieve something, build a rail-road, make a fortune, write an Iliad, as a compensation to himself for his abnormal position." (17). In another instance he tried to excuse himself for not having thrown himself into the fight for the

17. Journal, Vol. 7. p. 246. 1847.

freedom of the slaves. (18). He seemed to realize that he was never in the midst of the action of life. Perhaps for this reason he was fond of people who could accomplish things, while he watched from the side-lines.

He was a hero-worshipper, admiring those figures in history who were men of action. Action was a sign of character, power, and an indication of the Universal Law within man. There are times when he looked upon action as the only real prayer of man. Life was a search for power which could be achieved by uniting the self with the natural powers of nature. Expressions may be found which seem to indicate the equation of power and right. "Power is, in nature, the essential measure of right. Nature suffers nothing to remain in her kingdoms which cannot help itself." (19). It may be that he had in mind here a distinction between man and nature, but he often identified the laws of man and the laws of nature. At any rate, he has led many to believe that he was a worshipper of power. Nietzsche was pleased with Emerson's idea of power as he found it expressed in some of the Essays. The German writer, Von Eduard Baumgarten has seen this exaggerated sense of power in our author. (20). It is probable that Emerson was carried away in his enthusiasm for power,

18. See: Journal, Vol. 8. p. 316. 1852.

19. Works. II. 70.

20. See: Der Pragmatismus, p. 29. Baumgarten has compared the pragmatism of Emerson, W. James, and John Dewey. We believe his interpretation is less dependable when he includes Abraham Lincoln as a pragmatist.

which was, we believe, a reaction from the extreme passiveness which hampered his own attempts to be active.

According to our author, man's purpose in life was to gain control of all things; man was to keep all things under his feet; man was to gain victory over the things of life.

Things are in the saddle,
And ride mankind.
There are two laws discrete,
Not reconciled, ---
Law for man, and law for things;
The last builds town and fleet,
And doth the man unking. (21).

By "things" he did not mean nature as distinct from man, but rather, the mechanical inventions of man in opposition to human personality. Nature alone does not build town and fleet, but man, as he follows his own individual whim, organizes institutions which often hinder the development of the individual. He suspected the danger which should arise from the great mechanical progress of the period; factories were being built; rail-roads were being constructed. He accused man of spending his money for things and not for the benefit of the spiritual nature of man. Now that the machines were being made so perfectly, he visualized the possibility of the machine gaining control over man. The machine was becoming all and the engineer was becoming nobody. He asked

God not to trust man with too much power until he had learned how to use the power he possessed. But he said this, still believing that all was controlled by the Universal Will, and also believing that man gained power in the exact proportion as he learned its use. (22). In spite of this assumption, and in spite of his optimistic prophecy of a rapidly approaching world-brotherhood, he imagined the next war being fought in the air. (23).

The self-sufficient man of whom he spoke, is the master of life. In every workshop there were signs that indicated the fact that man was a master with tools, and such evidence gave him the optimism to forecast the victory of man over things. Such an optimism was based upon his view of the unique mental and spiritual capacities of the self-reliant man.

3. The Control of Reason or Intuition.

Mind, said Emerson, is the distinguishing element of man; the mind elevates man and places him at the apex of nature. He saw in the mind of man the capacity to make its own world, in much the same way as every river makes its own banks and valleys. "I believe the mind is the creator of the

22. See; Journal, Vol. 3. p. 360. November 5, 1834.

23. See: Works. VII. 163.

world, and is ever creating; --- that at last Matter is dead Mind; that mind makes the senses it sees with; that the genius of man is a continuation of the power that made him and that has not done making him." (24). He cared little about the actual existence of a thing, provided the picture of it was painted on the soul. The influence of Plato, Berkeley, and other idealists is apparent. (25). Emerson did not deny the existence of the material world, but he regarded the spiritual world as more significant.

Yet in spite of this idealistic approach, he took his clue for the mind of man from the world of nature. "The idea of vegetation is irresistible in considering mental activity. Man seems a higher plant. What happens here in mankind is matched by what happens out there in the history of grass and wheat." (26). Again, "You have first an instinct, then an opinion, then a knowledge, as the plant has root, bud and fruit. Trust the instinct to the end, though you can render no reason." (27). He seemed to wander back and forth between two opposing views of the world, the idealistic view and the naturalistic view. He strongly insisted that the

24. Works. XII. 17.

25. G. W. Cooke believed that Emerson came nearer accepting the philosophy of Plato than of any other philosopher. (See: Emerson, His Life Writings and Philosophy, pp. 272-3.) In the Essay, "Plutarch" Emerson gives evidence of his acquaintance with Berkeley. (Works. X. 307.)

26. Works. XII. 24.

27. Works. II. 330.

instinct should be trusted to the end, and this belief formed the basis for much of his outlook upon life.

We have already noted his idea of instinct in its relation to revelation. He made no distinction between the process of acquiring religious truth or secular truth; the process of learning was the same in each case. Since so much depends upon his idea of instinct, intuition, or reason, further analysis should be made.

Emerson gave the following definition of instinct: "We have a certain blind wisdom, a brain of the brain, a seminal brain, which has not yet put forth organs, which rests in oversight and presence, but which seems to sheathe a certain omniscience; and which, in despair of language, is commonly called Instinct." (28). At times he suggested that such an instinct was somewhat negative and regulative, but at other times he said its range was as wide as human nature and included the senses, the intellect, and the moral sentiment. In its lower function it may be looked upon as "common sense" and constitutes a natural balance to insure sanity. He saw the same power at work in the actions of squirrels hoarding nuts, and the gathering of honey by the bees. Instinct was the potential wit which he believed men shared in common with all nature.

The New England Transcendentalist believed man should

learn to direct his steps by means of instinct; a few plain rules and a few strong instincts are all the necessary requirements of life. "Will you let me say to you what I think is the organic law of learning? It is to observe the order, to keep down the talent, to enthrone the Instinct." (29). The instinct is the indescribable spark that leads to all discoveries in the field of science, it is responsible for the beauty in art. This reliance upon instinct is similar to the theories expressed by Herder, Schelling, Coleridge, and Carlyle; the idea is to be found in the inner light of the Quakers, and the divine illumination of Swedenborg. This was the distinctive element to be found among the German romanticists and the New England Transcendentalists. Herder spoke of the superiority of instinct over reason. Schelling identified human and divine reason and called the combination "intellectual intuition." Coleridge called the impersonal light in man, "reason." Most of the Transcendentalists in New England accepted a theory similar to the idea of the Emersonian Over-Soul.

Emerson used a number of terms to express his idea of intuition. Many of the terms are used interchangeably, and one is at loss at times to know what he meant. Few careful distinctions are made in the use of the terms "instinct," "inspiration," "spontaneity," "enthusiasm," "emotion," "reason," and "intuition." It is unfortunate that he used the terms so indiscriminately since so much of his system

depends upon the intuitive approach to knowledge. This indescribable something is compared with the power of yeast; it is a strong rush of thoughts. "It is with us a flash of light, then a long darkness, then a flash again." (30).

Very little can be accomplished in life without this element of flashing intuition which Emerson described as a combination of Aristotle's madness and Plato's leaping enthusiasm. The element of spontaneity is always included as a requisite of intuition whatever term he happened to use to describe its power.

This power of intuition does not come to man by any voluntary effort, but it comes as an involuntary act. "We lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of its activity. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams." (31). Individuals come into the world with a "wonderful whisper" which gives them direction for the whole road. Thus the process of arriving at the truth is not a conscious intellectual discipline, but it is more closely related to passive reverie. This reverie is called "divine reason" and is to be trusted completely, lest the divine work in man be hindered by the blinding power of selfishness and tradition.

30. Works. VIII. 273.

31. Works. II. 64.

Truth. It is not wise to talk, as men do, of reason as the gift of God bestowed, etc., or of reasoning from nature up to nature's God, etc. The intellectual power is not the gift, but the presence of God. Nor do we reason to the being of God, but God goes with us into nature; when we go or think at all. Truth is always new and wild as the wild air, and is alive. The mind is always true, when there is a mind, and it makes no difference that the premises are false, we arrive at true conclusions. (32).

Truth, then, does not depend upon human experience; it does not depend upon human reason or logic, and certainly not upon traditional revelation. Each man is supplied with truth because God is present in him. This theory needed no defense, for he believed it was a self-authenticating fact. (33).

Other terms are used in the place of intuition, such

32. Journal, Vol. 9. p. 14. February 29, 1856.

33. Emerson was criticised by some who said that any weak mind could have intuitions and feelings which they insisted were the direct communications of God. Emerson was asked how he could determine the source of the intuition, for such intuitions might be from below and not from above. Emerson replied, "They do not seem to me to be such; but if I am the Devil's child, I will live then from the Devil. No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature." (Works. II. 50.) It is not an adequate reply to say that they do not seem to me to be from below. Mr. Cooke has made an attempt to defend Emerson's theory of intuition. He says that Emerson has protected his theory by balances and checks. He stated that Emerson believed that no intuition was to be regarded as genuine which did not conform to the highest moral conduct. (See: Emerson, His Life Writings and Philosophy, p. 320.) But the highest moral conduct in Emerson's theory was a personal judgment which was based upon intuition. Neither would Emerson like the term "conform," for that would be dependent upon tradition. Cooke's defense is rather weak. It is the writer's view that Emerson can not be adequately defended at this point.

as, "thinking," "reason," and "intellectual power." When he said, "Beware when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet," (34). he was identifying thought with intuition. Such thoughts are the influx of the Universal Mind. "To think is to receive, -- to reflect is to receive truth immediately from God without any medium." (35). But the term "thinking" is sometimes used to mean the intellectual process of man. He was using the term with this meaning when he advised men not to craze themselves with thinking. It is not always possible to distinguish between the terms "reason" and "divine reason." He called Jesus a minister of pure reason. (36). He was using the term "reason" in the same sense when he said that everything in life had a crack in it with the exception of reason. A flash of reason may come to any man when he looks upon the absolute truth.

In the knowing process, he made a distinction between reason and understanding. The understanding was considered to be a more voluntary process which animals as well as men possess. The understanding served as an half-way house between divine reason and the world of lower nature. But reason or intuition is above the understanding and is to be considered the highest and most dependable approach to truth. (37).

34. Works. II. 308.

35. Journal, Vol. 2. p. 409. July 29, 1831.

36. See: Ibid. Vol. 3. pp. 235-6. December 19, 1833.

37. "Reason is the highest faculty of the soul -- what we mean often by the soul itself; it never reasons, never proves, it simply perceives; it is vision. The understanding toils all the time, compares, contrives, adds,

When a man began to depend upon his own reflective powers, instead of trusting the intuition, he secured a false sense of self-reliance. In such a manner it was possible for men to obscure the truth and misinterpret the meaning of life. In considering the problem of interpretation, he gave some attention to the theory of imagination, but his interpretation is not always clear. He saw the imagination as the cardinal human power, and described it as the use which reason made of the material world. Imagination does not come by study, but it is the power of the intellect to be where and what it sees; it is a "precursor of the reason." His theory of imagination included elements of the human understanding and elements of divine reason. The use of the imaginative powers enabled man to distinguish reality from illusion.

He tried to show the necessary relationship of imagination and illusion. "The doctrine of the Imagination can only be rightly opened by treating it in connection with the subject of Illusions. And the Hindoos alone have treated this last with sufficient breadth in their legends of the successive Maias of Vishnu. With them, youth, age, property, condition, events, persons, self, are only successive Maias, through which Vishnu

37. continued from page 101..... "argues, near-sighted but strong-sighted, dwelling in the present, the expedient, the customary. Beasts have some understanding but no Reason. Reason is potentially perfect in every man --- Understanding in very different degrees of strength." (Letters, Vol. 1. pp. 412-3. Written to Edward Bliss Emerson. Newton, Mass. May 31, 1834.)

mocks and instructs the soul." (38). With his idealistic approach to life, it is not surprising that he should be attracted to the Hindu philosophy in this consideration. Deceptions accompanied the senses and the intellect alike; man gropes his way in the kingdom of illusions. "But what a force of illusion begins life with us and attends us to the end! We are coaxed, flattered and duped from morn to eve, from birth to death; and where is the old eye that ever saw through the deception?" (39). He watched the world play tricks upon the senses and upon the reason. While he said that God was reality, yet God used illusion as His method of teaching. (40). If God uses illusion as his method of teaching, and if learning is essentially a product of intuition, by what means may one distinguish between illusion and reality? It seems unreasonable to believe that he should push his idea of illusion to its extreme, while at the same time depending upon intuition as the essential approach to truth. But he found use for the theory of illusion, for it seemed to provide him with a solution of the problems of evil, death, and emotion. Mr. Christy points out that Emerson, after the death of his son, was able to say that emotions, affections, and

38. Journal, Vol. 9. p. 302. February 16, 1861.

39. Works. VII. 172.

40. See: Journal, Vol. 7. p. 505. 1848; cf. Works. IV. 178.

persons could be set aside as illusions. (41). But in this respect, as in many other cases, he did not attempt consistency. However, Emerson should be commended for his courageous attempt to consider the difficult problem of the imagination which many another has avoided.

We must not overlook the fact that he was determined to emphasize throughout his works the idea of the self-reliant man. He expected men to rely completely upon the authority of the intuition. Intuition, the expression of the Over-Soul, was to stand against the voices of the past, the individual reason, and the striving of human understanding.

4. Man's Natural Goodness.

The moral nature of life which held Emerson's attention more constantly than any other subject, has exerted a vital influence upon his total outlook. As we have already suggested, he did not distinguish between true religion and true morality. When he spoke of the sovereignty of the moral element of life, he was also speaking of that which he considered to be the vital spiritual element of life. While he asserted that one may not always be conscious of God, he believed that one can not escape being conscious of the moral quality in life. He

41. See: The Orient in American Transcendentalism, p. 92.

spoke of the "moral intuition," or the "moral sentiment," as the supreme reality. But there is no distinction made between "intuition" and "moral intuition." Following the emphasis of Kant, he based all upon the moral certainty. Thus he has much to say of the will of man and the relation of man's will to the will of the Universal.

a. The Will and the All-Will.

Emerson saw the will of man as power; a power that did not depend upon insight alone, or affection alone, but upon a fusion of these two elements. (42). He considered the will as one of the great possessions of man. His treatment of will and power has led to much confusion among his interpreters. He said in his Essay, "Power," "A cultivated man, wise to know and bold to perform, is the end to which nature works, and the education of the will is the flowering and result of all this geology and astronomy." (43). In the same Essay he stated that all life is a search after power. Nietzsche and Baumgarten took the writer at his word and interpreted it as the will to power; this desire to obtain power has often run wild and dominated the other capacities of man. While this element is to be found in Emerson, it may hardly be said to be the prevailing element. For he did not always mean the

42. Works. VI. 29.

43. Works. VI. 53-4.

will of the individual man. More often he meant the All-Will, the Universal Will, the Divine Will which works in man and is a part of the higher nature of man. Since the Divine Will is not outside and beyond man, but located in each individual, it may easily be confused with the personal will of man.

Discord and strife arise when the private will meddles with the Universal Will. The Divine Will may be weakened if it relies too much upon tradition and institutions. There are no artificial means by which the Universal Will may be manufactured or developed. But the Divine Will must be allowed to enter a man without hindrance and allowed to invade his whole life. "A breath of will blows eternally through the universe of souls in the direction of the Right and Necessity. It is the air which all intellects inhale and exhale, and it is the wind which blows the worlds into order and orbit."

(44). Such a Will is miraculous because it is the very presence of God in man. There will always be disharmony in a man when he opposes the Universal Will. The name often given this Will was the "Will of Nature." We shall consider the Will of Nature more fully in the following chapter. We may say here that such a Will is supreme and always dominates the individual will. Since there is such a strong emphasis upon the will it would seem that Emerson would build his entire structure upon it, but this is not the case.

While there is an emphasis upon the will, we find also a similar emphasis upon knowledge. Perhaps one might suspect that here was an attempt to balance knowledge and will against each other, but Emerson said he was not interested in building a balanced view of life. At one time he said both thought and sentiment were necessary if freedom were to be achieved. The two ideas of power and passivity seem to be held together in the mind of our author. Baumgarten has seen this combination and has found it difficult to understand the logic of such a combination. (45).

It is rather difficult to determine to which of the two elements, knowledge or will, he gave the first place and the most power. He stated that man was by virtue of willing and not by virtue of knowing. (46). In such a statement he seemed to be giving the first place to the Christian position of the will. He wrote to Elizabeth Palmer Peabody:

I should certainly not have denied, awake, that the spiritual contains the intellectual nature, or that the moral is prior in God's order to the intellectual; which I believe. The two attributes of wisdom and goodness always face and always approach each other. Each when perfect becomes the other. Yet to the moral nature belongs sovereignty, and so we have an instinctive faith that to it all things shall be added, that the moral nature being righted, the circulations of the Universe take effect through the man as a member in its place, and so he learns sciences after a natural or divine way. (47).

45. See: Der Pragmatismus, p. 29.

46. See: Works. IV. 125.

47. Letters, Vol. 1. p. 450. August 3, 1835.

"Each when perfect becomes the other," here he seemed to combine the two elements. There is little doubt that the Concord Sage agreed with Plato in assuming that knowledge will insure right action. But many expressions may be found which seem to point to a dependence upon knowledge rather than upon the will. Writing of Jones Very in his Journal, he said, "He thinks me covetous in my hold of truth, of seeing truth separate, and of receiving or taking it, instead of merely obeying. The Will is to him all, as to me (after my own showing) Truth. He is sensible in me of a little colder air than that he breathes." (48). Emerson was attracted to the principle of truth as it was expressed in the Hindu theology. Mr. Christy seems to believe that Emerson's position was more closely related to Brahmanism than to Christianity. (49). There is evidence that he identified goodness and knowledge much of the time. "Truth will cure all our ills." (50). But both elements are the product of intuition and demonstrate the surge of the Universal within man. Both goodness and wisdom receive emphases

48. Journal, Vol. 5. p. 105. October 28, 1838.

49. Mr. Christy quotes from the System of the Vedanta, by Deussen, p. 403: "Christianity sees the essence of man in will, Brahmanism in knowledge; therefore for the former, salvation consists in a transformation of the will, a new birth, whereby the old becomes the new man; for the latter in a transformation of knowledge, in the dawning of the consciousness that one is not an individual but Brahman, the totality of all Being." (The Orient in American Transcendentalism, pp. 122-3.) Mr. Christy believes this statement may be applied in the case of Emerson, although he did understand that Emerson left some place for the will.

50. Journal, Vol. 5. p. 299. October 23, 1839.

at various times in this system, but the balance seems to lean to the side of wisdom.

b. The Native Goodness of Man.

The stress Emerson gave to the natural goodness of man may be considered a reaction to the "universal human cussedness" which many saw in Calvinism. (51). The view that God is incarnate in each man fitted perfectly into Emerson's system. Since the moral sentiment was supreme in man, it was natural to expect that man should be good. Each man possessed the sense of right and wrong, although the sense sometimes lay dormant and needed awakening by being directed to the truth. He found many ways of expressing this goodness of man. He believed each person was right, or to make himself right he need only allow a fuller expression of his personality. (52). This is but another way of saying that each man needs to become more conscious of the deep truth which resides within himself, and to express that truth in his life. The good man, then, is a seeker after perfection, but it is not to be found outside man, for each man is to find it in his

51. Irving Babbitt has made a critical analysis of the doctrine of the natural goodness of man. "The assertion of man's natural goodness is to be understood as a rebound from the doctrine of total depravity that was held by the more austere type of Christian." (Rousseau and Romanticism, p. 44.)

52. See: Journal, Vol. 7. p. 150. 1846.

own nature.

Virtue, he believed, was natural to the well born child, and is not to be found in theological or philosophical pursuits. If one but speak to the heart of any man there will be a noble response; bring men near one another and love will naturally follow. He saw a natural altruism in man which was working its way slowly but surely toward world peace and brotherhood. "A wise man, an open mind, is as much interested in others as in himself; they are only extensions of himself."

(53). Our author agreed with Socrates that all men are lovers of the truth. Emerson thought there was a certain scepticism in the idea of total depravity, for it did not seem to allow man the capacity to understand and express his own natural goodness. Some critics were led to believe that the Concord Sage was a Christian because he agreed with the biblical statement that "all things work together for good to them that love God." But there is a different content in the term "God"; the Christian believes that God was incarnate in Christ, while Emerson believed that God was incarnate in every man.

It is quite probable, as Mr. Christy suggests, that Emerson was attracted to the theory of Confucius who set forth a theory of the natural goodness of man. (54). However,

53. Journal, Vol. 9. p. 298. 1861.

54. "The recognition of the moral nature of men as set against the Calvinistic insistence of total depravity was probably one of the first things in Confucianism that drew Emerson's

the trend of thinking of the Unitarian clergymen was in this direction, and the influence of Rousseau may be seen in this connection. The idea expressed in the following quotation suggests the influence of Rousseau: "But as civilized life advanced, and civil and social institutions were erected, and life became more intellectual, devotion was degraded by a profane and vulgar idolatry." (55). The term "intellectual" here refers to the human or lower intelligence and not to the intelligence which is the product of direct intuition.

This acceptance of the theory of the natural goodness of man has called forth various opinions from his critics. Mr. Newton Dillaway has great sympathy for Emerson's sublime vision of the goodness of man as the only reality. He agrees with the opinion that the moral and spiritual welfare of the nation will be solved as soon as the laboring man is given an opportunity to satisfy his physical needs. (56). But this is not the Christian view of man's nature. We shall allow the Reverend D. Butler to give his criticism and suggest the

54. continued from page 110. ... "attention." (The Orient in American Transcendentalism, p. 31.) Mr. Christy believes that Emerson read some of Christianity into the teachings of Confucius. (See: Ibid. pp. 32-3.) Later, Mr. Christy points out the close resemblance of the treatment of the individual as found in Emerson and Confucius. At this point Emerson contradicted his emphasis upon the Hindu principle of universality.
55. Journal, Vol. 1. pp. 102-3. 1822.
56. See: Prophet of America, p. 6; also p. 249.

Christian view. "And herein seems to me to be one of the greatest weaknesses of his message. Goodness was too much separated from the only basis on which it can rest, or even has any meaning --- harmony with an all holy and perfect will; and evil was too much separated from the only fact, by which it receives its terrible meaning -- alienation from God's will." (57). It may be said that Emerson had an intuition of the goodness of man but no intuition of the evil in man.

For some time the problem of evil presented a real difficulty to the Concord Sage. At first he accepted the orthodox Christian view, but he continued to question it and worry over it. When he was about nineteen years of age he wrote to his aunt Mary, asking aid in his consideration of the origin of evil. (58). Shortly before he wrote this letter he had stated the orthodox position of evil and seemed to accept it. (59). But the Christian view is soon discarded,

57. The Teaching of Emerson, p. 17.

58. See: Letters, Vol. 1. p. 137. October 16, 1823.

59. "What is evil? There is an answer from every corner of this globe -- from every mountain and valley and sea. The enslaved, the sick, the disappointed, the poor, the unfortunate, the dying, the surviving, cry out. It is here. Every man points to his dwelling or strikes his breast to say, It is here.... What is its origin? The sin which Adam brought into the world and entailed upon his children." (Journal, Vol. 1. p. 115. February 23, 1822.) About this time Emerson also made a distinction between right and wrong which he looked upon as a permanent standard. (See: Ibid. Vol. 1. p. 209. January 11, 1823.) At this time he was conscious of the vast amount of vexation, crime, and misery in the world. (See: Ibid. Vol. 1. p. 173. October 1822.)

and much of the time it appears he was largely unconscious of the sin and evil which others were able to see in human nature. It is most uncommon for him to speak of the "rotteness of human nature" as he did once in his Journal. (60).

In his occasional reference to evil, he seldom spoke of it as a product of man's choice. "The existence of evil and malignant men does not depend on themselves or on men; it indicates the virulence that still remains uncured in the universe, uncured and corrupting, and hurling out these pestilent rats and tigers, and men rat-like and wolf-like." (61). Such an expression is unusual and is not to be considered as the general emphasis, unless one identifies the terms "malignant" and "ignorant."

When our author spoke of the wickedness of the mass, of the malice of the individual man, he meant no serious condemnation, for indeed he did not really mean malice. "That pure malignity exists, is an absurd proposition." (62). Many people were unripe and merely ignorant of the true knowledge; they were men with too little experience. He advised such to seek more experience even if the coat became a bit soiled and coarse in the process. (63). The traditional terms,

60. See: Journal, Vol. 8. p. 259. October 14, 1851.

61. Journal, Vol. 8. p. 452. 1854.

62. Ibid. Vol. 6. pp. 219-20. 1842.

63. See: Ibid. Vol. 6. p. 302. 1842.

"good" and "evil" made distinctions which he was fond of denying. "Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution; the only wrong what is against it." (64). Thus right and wrong are placed upon an individual basis. He liked to say that evil was good in the making; and evil was a condition of unripeness and error.

In our attempt to deal with his idea of evil, we must not give the impression that the problem of evil was thoroughly presented, for our author gave little space and time to this subject. Evil is often simply dismissed as an illusion: "Good is positive. Evil is merely privative, not absolute; it is like cold, which is the privation of heat. All evil is so much death or nonentity." (65). The idea that evil is negative has been cited by Mr. Carpenter as an indication of the influence of Neoplatonism upon Emerson. "If matter is the absence of spirit, evil is the absence of good. So Neoplatonism taught, and Emerson also." (66). Again, Emerson reflected, "I reached the other day the end of my fifty-seventh year, and am easier in my mind than hitherto. I could never give much reality to evil and pain. But now when my wife says

64. Works. II. 50.

65. Works. I. 124.

66. Emerson and Asia, p. 83.

perhaps this tumor on my shoulder is a cancer, I say, What if it is?" (67). He seemed to believe and live as though he could not see the evils about him. Those who have studied his writings are impressed by his idea of the non-reality of evil. John Albee was greatly impressed by his theory of the non-existence of evil. (68). Phillips Russell seems to have a better understanding of Emerson's system, and yet he is sympathetic with the unorthodox views. (69). But the writer is more inclined to accept the criticism of Charles Eliot Norton who was a personal friend of the Concord Sage. (70).

67. Journal, Vol. 9. p. 273. 1860.

68. "His highest act of faith was in believing that evil had no real existence. The evolution of the strongest survive; in morals the best; in beauty the most beautiful." (Remembrances of Emerson, p. 187.) The writer does not agree with Albee's judgment that it is a "high act of faith," but rather it is an act of blindness.

69. "For himself he simplified the question of good and evil by denying that evil had more than a temporary or private existence. Evil was not an entity, but a temporary absence of good. Emerson believed that the world was made up of tendencies, which were always proceeding in the right direction, or towards melioration, and that it were better not to interfere with these tendencies by the interposition of the human will." (Emerson: The Wisest American, pp. 300-1.)

70. "His serene sweetness, the pure whiteness of his soul, the reflection of his soul in his face, were never more apparent to me; but never before in intercourse with him had I been so impressed with the limits of his mind... He can accept nothing as a fact that tells against his dogma. His optimism becomes a bigotry, and, though a nobler type than the common American conceit of the preeminent excellence of American things as they are, has hardly less of the quality of fatalism. To him this is the best of all possible worlds, and the best of all times. He refuses to believe in disorder or evil. Order is the absolute law; disorder is but a phenomenon; good

While Emerson tried to dismiss the problem of evil, occasionally it came back to him in the form of error and ignorance. He did not understand evil as an invasion of the intellect and the will. Evil was merely a part of the process of growth. Evil, crime, and disease were bound to disappear by themselves without the individual attempts to destroy them. Nature is so constituted that it will overcome the evils of the world without the petty interference of man. He wrote, "the evils we suffer will at last end themselves through the incessant opposition of Nature to everything hurtful." (71).
 And although man is not needed in this process of elimination, it is well for him to give what effort he can. "It is a comfort to reflect that the gigantic evils which seem to us so mischievous and so incurable will at last end themselves and rid the world of their presence, as all crime sooner or later must. But be that event for us soon or late, we are not excused from playing our short part in the best manner we can, no matter how insignificant our aid must be." (72). It was upon this belief that he was able to base his excessive optimism.

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70. continued from page 115. "is absolute, evil but good in the making.. He is most innocent, the most inexperienced of men who have lived in and reflected on the world." (Arthur Christy, The Orient in American Transcendentalism, pp. 119-20. Quoted from the Letters of Charles Eliot Norton. Edited by Sara Norton and M. de Wolfe Howe, Published in 1913. Vol. 1. pp. 503-4.)
71. Works. X. 189; also see: Journal, Vol. 9. p. 238. 1859.
72. Works. X. 232.

One can not fail to see the influence of the East upon this view of evil. There are times when he seemed to accept no discrimination between good and evil, between saint and sinner.

The Indian teaching, through its cloud of legends, has yet a simple and grand religion, like a queenly countenance seen through a rich veil. It teaches to speak the truth, love others, as yourself, and to despise trifles. The East is grand, -- and makes Europe appear the land of trifles. Identity; identity! friend and foe are of one stuff.... Cheerful and noble is the genius of this cosmogony. (73).

Yet a whole-hearted acceptance of the philosophy of the East could not have accounted for his optimism. He followed the Hindu idea only so far as he wished. While he looked upon evil as an illusion, he made goodness one of the chief realities in his system, whereas the Hindu must also deny the reality of goodness. This is another example of his method of accepting from any source without bothering about consistency.

The problem of sin received less consideration than the problem of evil; perhaps his dislike of the Biblical emphasis upon sin may account for this. While he was still at college he used the term "sin" with its orthodox meaning. At the age of twenty he determined to devote his time to God in the

war against sin. (74). After the battle of Bull-Run he is supposed to have said that God was delivering his judgment upon the people because of their sins. (75). When he was twenty-three years old he recognized Pascal's attempt to expose the contradictory elements in human nature, but at this time he chose to make no comments about the contradictory element. (76). His revolt from the idea of sin may be seen in the following expression:

As for King Swedenborg, I object to his cardinal position in morals that evils should be shunned as sins. I hate preaching. I shun evils as evils. Does he not know --- Charles Lamb did --- that every poetic mind is a pagan, and to this day prefers Olympian Jove, Apollo and the Muses and the Fates, to all the barbarous indigestion of Calvin and the Middle Ages? As for "shunning of evils as sins", I prefer the ethics of Vishnu. (77).

He spent more energy condemning the current idea of sin than he used in forming his own idea of sin.

The new day should dispense with the orthodox idea of sin; the less modern man had to do with sin, the better. Man could not afford to waste his time with such compunctions. Thomas Carlyle was annoyed with Emerson because he refused to face the problem of sin and evil. When Emerson was in

74. See: Journal, Vol. 1. pp. 366-7. April 18, 1824.

75. See: G. W. Cooke: Emerson, His Life Writings and Philosophy, p. 145.

76. See: Journal, Vol. 2. p. 173. February 1827.

77. Journal, Vol. 7. pp. 123-4. 1845.

London he was conducted by Carlyle through some of the slums in order to convince the American of the untiring activities of the Devil. (78). While sin, the judgment day, and the Devil tormented Emerson's forefathers, he would not let such ideas torment him. (79). To him, sins were only hideous dreams caused by the exaggeration of evils. The idea of original sin was foolish and harmful.

Our young people are diseased with the theological problems of original sin, origin of evil, predestination and the like. These never presented a practical difficulty to any man, -- never darkened across any man's road who did not go out of his way to seek them. These are the soul's mumps and measles and whooping-coughs, and those who have not caught them cannot describe their health or prescribe the cure. A simple mind will not know these enemies. (80).

Here he seemed to ~~say that~~ a sick mind was the cause of the idea of sin, whereas the Christian would insist that sin is the root of the sickness of the mind and the spirit.

If the idea of sin must be considered, Emerson would give the term a new content. At times the conception of sin as a choice of the particular against the idea of the universal has been expressed by Emerson. We quote his positive statement, "He is moral, -- we say with Marcus Aurelius and with Kant, -- whose aim or motive may become a universal rule,

78. See: Wilson, Carlyle at His Zenith, p. 52.

79. See: Works. I. 281-2.

80. Works. II. 132.

binding on all intelligent beings." (81). The best and most concise definition of the term "sin" is as follows: "Sin is when a man trifles with himself, and is untrue to his own constitution." (82). Sin, then, is not disobedience to the will of God, but disobedience to the self. While he meant by self a God-endowed self, this is not what the Calvinist or the orthodox Christian meant by the self. When Emerson said that God entered a man, he meant that the man was completely hallowed and henceforth enjoyed all good. (83).

But sin was usually thought of simply as a lack of knowledge, and less often as disobedience to the self. "I say that sin is ignorance." (84). Although this is an early expression, he seems to carry the same idea throughout his works. With Plato, he believed that no man did wrong intentionally; the possession of truth would assure the proper conduct. Since fear and sin came from ignorance alone, the problems of evil, sin, fear, and suffering may be solved readily by a process of education. The solution then depended upon knowledge rather than the will as the Christian believed.

Emerson liked to believe that all men were much better than they seemed, and upon this belief he based his faith in human nature. "As every man at heart wishes the best and

81. Works. X. 92.

82. Journal, Vol. 9. p. 20. 1856.

83. See: Ibid. Vol. 5. p. 38. September 10, 1838.

84. Ibid. Vol. 2. p. 75. January 8, 1826.

not inferior society, wishes to be convicted of his error and to come to himself, -- so he wishes that the same healing should not stop in his thought, but should penetrate his will or active power." (85). Socrates might have lived a few years longer had all men been so willingly convicted of their errors. Emerson believed men to be better than they seemed, and he helped men to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think. As a solution to the error, suffering, and pain, he suggested that men come into closer harmony, not with a personal God, but with themselves in whom God continually dwelt.

He considered the feelings of pain, suffering, and tragedy as abnormal conditions which were unendurable to him. Woodbury remembers that Emerson stated he read nothing sad in literature. (86). He despised the thought of suffering and ignored it whenever it was possible. For one who depended so much upon intuition, for one who confessed he possessed the spirit of the poet, it is surprising to find him repressing his emotions. In this respect, he was following in the footsteps of Stoicism, and there is a stoical

85. Works. III. 276-7.

86. Emerson's remark surprised Woodbury, for he wondered what Emerson read if he avoided the sad in literature; he would thus eliminate much of the great literature of the world. (See: Talks with Ralph Waldo Emerson, pp. 55-6; also see: Letters, Vol. 6. p. 7. A letter written to Emma Lazarus, February 24, 1868.)

element in his advice to a friend caught in the circumstances of tragedy. "In the presence of dismaying events we must be as self-collected and sane as we can, and await the return of the Divine Soul which will not forget us in these extremes. Perhaps the best facts in history are the triumphs of the will of the sufferer in fiercest pain." (87).

This element of stoicism was more than a belief to him, for he seems to have made it a part of his life. He had the opportunity to grieve and to suffer; he experienced several unfortunate events, but he seemed to dismiss such things from his life, and seemed to wish others to believe he was incapable of suffering.

I told Jones Very that I had never suffered, that I could scarce bring myself to feel a concern for the safety and life of my nearest friends that would satisfy them; that I saw clearly that if my wife, my child, my mother, should be taken from me, I should still remain whole, with the same capacity of cheap enjoyment from all things. I should not grieve enough, although I love them. But could I make them feel what I feel, -- the boundless resources of the soul, --- remaining entire when particular threads of relation are snapped, -- I should then dismiss forever the little remains of uneasiness I have in regard to them. (88).

Those who have studied the life and works of Emerson can hardly believe this confession is merely a brave attempt to cover up his emotions. But if he possessed this incapacity

87. Letters, Vol. 6. p. 129. To Emma Lazarus. August 19, 1870.

88. Journal, Vol. 5. pp. 114-5. November 3, 1838.

for grief, it should not have blinded him to the reality of such emotions.

The emotions are considered surface qualities, superficial, and as such indicate deeper trouble. He urged men not to be content with the analysis of the emotions, but asked them to seek beneath the surface for the roots of the problem.

Misery is superficial, and the remedy, when it can be attained, of presenting to the mind Universal Truths, is a perfect one. The wise man, that is, the healthy mind learns ... that every event, every pain, every misfortune, seen in the perspective of the past, is beautiful; that we are embosomed in beauty; and if, in long retrospect, things are yet ugly, it is because the mind is diseased, and the rays are dislocated and not suffered to fall in a focus and so present a just perspective to the Reason. Of course the aim of the wise physician will then be to repair the general health. (89).

Misery is not dependent upon circumstances beyond ones control, but depends upon the state of the mind which one is able to change. Thus the toothache, indigestion, and any pain may be cured by raising the aim of the patient. Doctors and their medicines are not needed, reformers of society are not required, but the general aim of the mind of man needs to be raised. (90). He said a hump in the back reveals the fact that there is a hump in the brain. (91). With such theories he seemed to be preparing the United States for the doctrine

89. Journal, Vol. 4. p. 23. March 14, 1836.

90. See: Journal, Vol. 5. p. 428. July 6, 1841; also Works. I. 123-4.

91. See: Works. VI. 45.

of Mary Baker Eddy and the religion of Christian Science. He believed there was such a unity in the being of man that a defect in any part would appear in other structures. While a man is searching for good ends, he will be strong and healthful; he will be free from suffering and pain; he will not recognize the reality of sin and evil.

5. THE THEORY OF COMPENSATION.

a. Fate and Freedom.

The problems of evil and suffering gave Emerson many trying hours in his youth. He saw there were certain limitations in life which he was at loss to know how to explain. So many things seemed to happen by chance, and yet men seemed to possess an element of freedom. He did not want to blame God for the difficulties which he found in life, since God was so closely related to man, nature, and all life. Later in life he seemed to solve for himself the problems of suffering and evil by choosing the door of escape, making evil and suffering illusory.

The theories of fatalism suggested by the Greeks and the Indians had attracted him, although he was not prepared to admit that fate was a blind force which controlled life. He observed certain natural laws in the universe which acted

as limitations. Man should learn to accept the limitations and use the laws for his own advance. He gave the name of fate to such laws of nature which at the moment seemed to limit man. But man is not completely limited by the laws of nature, for when he comes to understand them more completely he may use them to advance in the direction of freedom. Thus it is man's intimate relation to nature, the lower creations of nature, which limits him and accounts for the idea of fatalism. Man may use his intellect and convert into a wholesome force the powers of nature which threaten to destroy him. By aid of intuition and moral sentiment man may come to understand these powers and thus eradicate fate.

Beside the element of fate, he saw an element of freedom in man.

Nor can he blink the free will. To hazard the contradiction, -- freedom is necessary. If you please to plant yourself on the side of Fate, and say, Fate is all; then we say, a part of Fate is the freedom of man. Forever wells up the impulse of choosing and acting in the soul. Intellect annuls Fate. So far as a man thinks, he is free. (92).

"Freedom" and "power" are sometimes presented as identical terms, particularly when they are used in opposition to the term "Fate." Although ninety-nine parts of life may be determined by fate, the one small part of power may have a miraculous energy and dissolve all the rest. (93). The

92. Works. VI. 23.

93. See: Letters, Vol. 4. pp. 376-7. July 22, 1853.

limitations of fate may be overcome and power will triumph. Although Emerson uses the terms "freedom," "free-will," and "power," the will of man is never entirely free, but must be considered a partial act. The individual will of man may work in cooperation with the Universal Will, but the latter possesses the sovereign power. When he says the "intellect annuls fate," he means the Universal Intelligence and not the individual intelligence. Man is only free as he thinks and acts in accordance with the Universal Power.

Emerson saw but one solution to the mystery of human life, a solution for fate, freedom, and foreknowledge. This he called the "double consciousness." "A man must ride alternately on the horses of his private and his public nature, as the equestrians in the circus throw themselves nimbly from horse to horse, or plant one foot on the back of one and the other foot on the back of the other." (94). It is not, either-or, but both, both fate and freedom, both light and darkness, both saint and sinner. But the idea of "double consciousness" is not quite satisfactory to our author, so he continued to deal with the problem of fate, and substituted for fate a rather abstract theory of compensation.

94. Works. VI. 47; also see: Journal, Vol. 8. p. 211. 1851.

b. The Law of Compensation.

It was probably Emerson's complete dependence upon law, law as the basis of nature and man, which made it possible for him to substitute his law of compensation for the idea of fate. His emphasis upon law made it possible to solve the problem of justice and judgment, and caused him to substitute it in place of the Christian idea of Heaven. The law of compensation depended upon an exact law of cause and effect. In other words, each gets exactly what he deserves in this life now, and not at some later date in some imagined utopia. Justice is not postponed, but rewards and penalties are made day by day in this life. Life then, is exactly what one makes of it.

This belief is supported by the attempt to show that there are always two elements combined to make up life. There is light and darkness, negative and positive, subjective and objective, man and woman, etc. Nature seemed to be continually demonstrating the balancing act. He saw this law illustrated in physical bodies; a surplus in one part of the body may be paid out of a deficit in another part of the body. (95). He tried to show that a superiority in the mind or body of a man is balanced by an inferiority in another part of the mind or body. He believed this was an indication that nature hated

95. See: Works. II. 98-9.

monopolies and was always in a process of levelling-down all things.

While cause and effect never varies, the exact cause can not always be shown. Yet if one could see and understand the effect, one would be able to see the direct relation to the cause. This theory of compensation caused him to have little sympathy for the black slaves, since they got exactly what they deserved. He had no doubt that when the slaves improved they would find their way out of slavery. (96). For much the same reason he disregarded and neglected the working conditions of the poorer class of people, and only rarely is he moved by the sight of hardships and suffering. Since life is what people make of it, he had little sympathy for those who made little of it.

When he was brought face to face with some hardship which he could not avoid, he assumed that such a condition brought its own compensation with it. (97). If a man had a

96. Later in life Emerson did become more interested in the problem of slavery, but he never gave his whole-hearted efforts in the fight against it. He was not interested in social reform, but believed individual growth would solve all the social conditions. Social action to him was surface action.
97. The theory of compensation is to be found among the Orientals, and particularly among the Persians. The saying of Hafiz has been quoted by Mr. Carpenter by way of comparison: "'Here is the sum, that, when one door opens, another shuts.'" (Emerson and Asia, p. 181.)

temperament which unsuited him for society he developed such traits of self-reliance which are to be found in various men. (98). He said he found in the soul of man a compensation for all apparent inequalities in life; the soul contains the very events that shall befall it. When his friends were in difficult circumstances he told them to remember this law. "To offset the drag of temperament and **race**, which pulls down, learn this lesson, namely, that by the cunning co-presence of two elements, which is throughout nature, whatever lames or paralyzes you draws in with it the divinity, in some form, to repay." (99).

Emerson concluded that nothing outside of man could bring him harm; man alone brought suffering upon himself, and each man must blame himself for his own suffering. This does not coincide with the Christian doctrine of sacrificial love, hence we judge his doctrine to be more Stoical than Christian. "Thus do all things preach the indifferency of circumstances. The man is all. Everything has two sides, a good and an evil. Every advantage has its tax. I learn to be content. But the doctrine of compensation is not the doctrine of indifferency." (100). However, this doctrine produced in Emerson an

98. See: Works. II. 117. It is possible that Emerson is here thinking of his own unsocial nature.

99. Works. VI. 47-8.

100. Works. II. 120.

indifferent attitude toward suffering and pain. He tried to protect his doctrine, saying that good, virtue, love, and such virtues are not taxed; there is no penalty against the positive virtues. He said the soul is greater than any compensation, and the whole Being is affirmative, thus excluding the negative. Virtue is really the incoming of the Divine and has no limits. He could find no tax against the knowledge of the theory of compensation.

c. The Rule of Providence.

The idea of cause and effect to be found in the theory of compensation does not carry with it the freedom it might seem to suggest. He did not mean that each man chooses and determines the course of events. But man is bound by certain laws of nature and he can express only what his nature determines. This seems to be a type of providence, in some respects like the system of Calvin. But instead of a transcendent God who rules man by Divine decrees, Emerson has substituted an immanent God within, or the Law of Nature within.

We find the idea of providence stated in various ways. He spoke of an unwearied providence which gave blindness to those who possessed uncontrolled desires. He spoke of a divine

providence which will not save men except they cooperate. He assured men that they did not elect but were elected to a task. The divine providence is so powerful that the chiefest benefits are sent disguised as calamities; and "man can not prevent the blessing." But the Concord Sage tried to give his idea of providence a broader basis than the traditional doctrine.

The Ancients believed in a serene and beautiful Genius which ruled in the affairs of nations; which, with a slow but stern justice, carried forward the fortunes of certain chosen houses, weeding out single offenders or offending families, and securing at last the firm prosperity of the favorites of Heaven. It was too narrow a view of the Eternal Nemesis. There is a supreme Providence which rules the fate of nations, which makes little account of time, little of one generation or race, makes no account of disasters, conquers alike by what is called defeat or by what is called victory, thrusts aside enemy and obstruction, crushes everything immoral as inhuman, and obtains the ultimate triumph of the best race by the sacrifice of everything which resists the moral laws of the world. It makes its own instruments, creates the man for the time, trains him in poverty, inspires his genius, and arms him for his task. It has given every race its own talent, and ordains that only that race which combines perfectly with the virtues of all shall endure. (101).

Such a doctrine is less personal than the Christian doctrine of providence. Only on rare occasions did he express a more personal view, as the following indicates: "There is in some men, as it were, a pre-existent harmony established between them and the course of events, so that they will at the

precise moment that which God does. They are pitched to the tune of the time." (102). This was written when he was about thirty-one years of age, and as he grew older his idea of providence became less personal and further removed from the Christian doctrine.

The view of man which we have been considering is in many respects dissimilar to the traditional view of the Christian. By way of summary, we may contrast the two views. The idea of the individual worth of man is both Christian and Emersonian. In one, the idea of the worth of man is based upon a high opinion of man's powers as he follows the laws of nature. The Christian emphasizes the unworthiness of man as he sees himself in God's sight, but he is assured of his own significance because of the great love shown to individuals and the human race, by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christianity has always clung to a faith in a personal relationship between God and man, a Father and son relationship, whereas the Emersonian system has lost sight of this intimate fellowship. The stress placed upon the worth of the individual has failed to give adequate place for the idea of social salvation as it was found among the early Christians. It is difficult for some to understand how the idea of the worth of the individual can be maintained without

102. Journal, Vol. 3. p. 345. September 17, 1834.

belief in the personal care of God for each man, and without a closer relationship among individuals in some form of a beloved community.

Perhaps the loss of faith in the personal relationship with a transcendent God, along with a vague social theory, may help to account for the emphasis upon the self-reliance of man. Emerson's single statement that self-reliance is reliance upon God, is not to be identified with Christian dependence. One depends upon an impersonal power within, while the other looks to a personal God outside and beyond man and nature. One is similar to the Stoic idea of reliance upon Reason, the other is a reliance upon the grace of God. While the Christian stresses the surrender of the will of man, Emerson allowed more significance to the search for knowledge.

Emerson's conception of the natural goodness of man has no relation to the orthodox Christian conception. The fallen man, in the Christian doctrine, possesses no saving goodness; the alienation of man from God can only be reconciled by the approach from the side of God. The Concord Sage did not admit this alienation, but rather saw in man a divine element which had grown stronger during the ages, and would continue to grow. He saw love and goodness in the inevitable course of things.(103). The attempt to explain

103. See: Works. I. 372.

away sin, evil, and suffering is in violent contrast to the awful reality of sin as it is expressed in the Hebrew and Christian traditions.

The ideas of compensation and providence also bear witness to the differences between this system and the traditional faith of Christianity. The opinion that each gets exactly what he deserves now, is wholly different from the attitude of the sinner, who in all humility bemoans his unworthiness, and is certain that the mercy of God is more than he deserves. The Emersonian system is an exact system of justice, depending upon immovable, impersonal law. It is an abstract outlook, demanding allegiance to an unconscious principle, while the Christian doctrine calls for loyalty to a Person who can understand motives as well as conduct. If God has made an impersonal law to rule man, it is difficult to understand how His dealings with man can be anything but impersonal. Such a system will necessarily lack the qualities of love, mercy, and passion which have always been a part of traditional Christianity. Emerson's "love" is not Christian "love." "Love, and you shall be loved. All love is mathematically just, as much as the two sides of an algebraic equation." (104). If life depends upon such a system of law, upon what basis can one say that love, along with goodness, will inevitably triumph?

104. Works. II. 116. cf: "Love is only the reflection of a man's own worthiness from other men." (Journal, Vol. 5. p. 359. December 22, 1839.)

CHAPTER FOUR

T H E H A R M O N I O U S W O R L D

1. The Nature and Unity of the World.

While man receives the most consistent emphasis in Emerson's system, Nature may be ranked a close second. Such a statement should be considered with care, for God, man, and Nature are brought together in such a close unity. The New England Transcendentalist often fused the three into one, calling the core of the unity the "self-reliant man." The analysis made by Mr. Frothingham contains some truth: "Pantheism is said to sink man and nature in God; Materialism to sink God and man in nature; and Transcendentalism to sink God and nature in man." (1). This is but another way of saying what has already been said, namely, the the Over-Soul is principally located within man, and is not something outside him. However, Nature is a very significant element in this unity, and we shall consider the part it plays in this system.

In one of the several essays written upon the theme Nature, we find the world divided into two parts, Nature

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1. V. L. Parrington: Main Currents in American Thought, Vol. 2. p. 383. The quotation is taken from Transcendentalism in New England. Chapter 14.

and Soul. "Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguishes as the Not me, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name Nature." (2). In the common-sense definition, he says everything which refers to that which is unchanged by man, such as air, space, the river, and the leaves, etc., is considered nature. Our author used each of the definitions at random without explaining the content of the term. This failure to make concise distinctions makes the interpretation most difficult. The term "Nature" is usually endowed with a greater power than most Christian theologians and philosophers are prepared to accept. Eventually we shall consider the many powers which our author has discovered in nature.

For the present, we shall mention the element of idealism to be found in his conception of nature. He understood that his Transcendentalism was but a form of idealism which had its roots in a system of philosophy. "What is popularly called Transcendentalism among us, is Idealism; Idealism as it appears in 1842." (3). The word had come from Immanuel

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2. Works. I. 4-5. This definition is similar to the one we shall accept and use. By nature, we mean everything below the level of human intelligence, including the various physical activities of the body; we do not include the mental and spiritual activities as a part of nature.
 3. Works. I. 329.

Kant who insisted there were intuitions which the mind brought to all experience. Emerson believed in the power of thought and will, in inspiration and miracle, and he saw such emphases in Berkeley, Bacon and Jesus. (4). In all sensual experience he saw interference; preconceptions were added and mixed with perceptions. The mind itself was a significant element in all experience.

There is an attempt to explain the basis for this idealism. "What difference does it make, whether Orion is up there in the heaven, or some god prints the image in the firmament of the soul? The relation of parts and the end of the whole remaining the same..... Whether nature enjoy a substantial existence without, or is only in the apocalypse of the mind, it is alike useful and alike venerable to me." (5). Nature was not substance, but phenomena, as Berkeley and other idealists had insisted. So long as men were unable to test the accuracy of their senses, the idealist would be satisfied with his theory. He believed men could depend upon the stability of phenomena, for God would not jest with men. God, or Nature would teach the human mind to receive certain sensations which man would learn to call the sun, the moon, man, flowers, etc. This idealism saw the world in God: "The

4. See: Works. II. 309-10; also Works. V. 238-9.

5. Works. I. 47; 48.

world proceeds from the same spirit as the body of man. It is a remoter and inferior incarnation of God, a projection of God in the unconscious." (6). Again, "Every spirit builds itself a house, and beyond its house a world, and beyond its world a heaven. Know then that the world exists for you. For you is the phenomenon perfect." (7).

In spite of this idealistic view of nature, he was somewhat influenced by the materialistic conception of nature. There is a firm insistence upon the idea of nature as a system of laws and rules which do not deviate. "Nature is an endless combination and repetition of a very few laws." (8). He asserted that the fate of man was determined by the stern rules of nature.

Why should we be afraid of Nature, which is no other than 'philosophy and theology embodied?' Why should we fear to be crushed by savage elements, we who are made up of the same elements? Let us build to the Beautiful Necessity, which makes man brave in believing that he cannot shun a danger that is appointed, not incur one that is not; to the Necessity which rudely or softly educates him to the perception that there are no contingencies; that Law rules throughout existence; a Law which is not intelligent but intelligence; -- not personal nor impersonal -- it disdains words and passes understanding; it dissolves persons; it vivifies nature; yet solicits the pure in heart to draw on all its omnipotence. (9).

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- 6. Works. I. 64-5
 - 7. Works. I. 76.
 - 8. Works. II. 15.
 - 9. Works. VI. 49.

The same idea was expressed in Stoical terms when he affirmed that one mind enveloped the universe. Like the Stoic conception, this mind was impersonal, blending with man and nature alike, thus making it difficult to distinguish between the activity of the mind and the activity of law in the chain of causes and effects. He saw in each particle, small though it may be, a microcosm. The fable of Proteus carried an important truth, namely, all things hasten back to unity. "A leaf, a drop, a crystal, a moment of time, is related to the whole, and partakes of the perfection of the whole. Each particle is a microcosm, and faithfully renders the likeness of the world." (10). The entire replica of the world existed in each particle in man and nature alike; there were no lawless or inconsistent particles. If one could but understand the "flower in the crannied wall," one could understand all life in both man and nature. In fact, it was in nature that he saw the clue to the understanding of man. (The Christian approach would be to interpret nature in the light of God and man.)

Nature and man were so closely related that one did not need to turn to living nature in order to find the clue to life; a little stone from the city wall might show the relationship. (11). The relationship is also to be seen in

10. Works. I. 43.

11. See: Works. III. 182.

the vegetable kingdom: "The idea of vegetation is irresistible in considering mental activity. Man seems a higher plant. What happens here in mankind is matched by what happens out there in the history of grass and wheat." (12). A certain identity is to be seen in all, although there may be a minor diversity. But the diversity does not seem to be very great in the following idea: "There is a perfect correspondence; or 'tis only man modified to live in a mud-bank. A fish in like manner is man furnished to live in the sea; a thrush, to fly in the air; and a mollusk is a cheap edition with a suppression of the costlier illustrations, designed for dingy circulation, for shelving in an oyster-bank or among the seaweed." (13). Emerson was fond of emphasizing the unity to be seen in all things, such as a drop of water, a grain of sand, a leaf, the muskrat, and man.

2. The Endowments of Nature.

a. The Superior Power of Nature.

Throughout the Essays are to be found a discrimination between the power of nature and the will of man. The power of nature predominates and overpowers the individual will of

12. Works. XII. 24.

13. Works. XII. 22.

man. "Our action is overmastered and characterized above our will by the law of nature." (14). Again, "Not less conspicuous is the preponderance of nature over will in all practical life. There is less intention in history than we ascribe to it." (15). Or, "I say that the power of Nature predominates over the human will in all works of even the fine arts, in all that respects their material and external circumstances." (16). In one of his poems he allows nature to speak thus,

I moulded kings and saviours,
And bards o'er kings to rule;
But fell the starry influence short,
The Cup was never full. (17).

Numerous other quotations might be found which indicate the superior power of nature over man.

By the individual will of man which is overpowered by nature, Emerson meant the will which is a product of man's intelligence and experience. Some might interpret such a will as mere whim of selfish desire. The Concord Sage looked upon such a will as opposed to a man's true nature. The individual will of man, when it is not in tune with the Universal Will, is certain to be overmastered and defeated.

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- 14. Works II. 110.
 - 15. Works. II. 134.
 - 16. Works. VII. 47.
 - 17. Works. IX. 247.

The will of nature has been endowed with such great power because it is a part of the Universal Will. This Will is the product of instinct or intuition, and is the guiding power in man in his progress toward the Universal. He said a certain poet sang to him the following truth: "He perceives that if his law is still paramount, if still he have elemental power, if his word is sterling yet in nature, it is not conscious power, it is not inferior but superior to his will. It is instinct.'" (18). The power of nature, then, is an element of the Over-Soul, and may be depended upon in all circumstances. When this power is found within man, it is called sentiment; the same power is called law when it is found outside man. Great success is achieved by man when he allows this power to flow through him.

b. The Moral Quality of Nature.

Emerson wrote in a letter to Margaret Fuller: "When I write I perversely turn my back on ethics, and write on Nature, Poets, Life, --- I can write on anything but ethics, with my forward pen." (19). Perhaps he was right, if he meant by ethics a systematic study of the problems of

18. Works. I. 72.

19. Letters, Vol. 3. p. 243. Concord. February 26, 1844.

conduct in opposition to a less systematic consideration of morals. The Concord Sage was continually dealing with the moral element of life, and he found a moral quality at the heart of impersonal nature. He even stated that if natural philosophy were faithfully written there would be no need of moral philosophy, for the one would include the other. (20).

The moral quality of nature, which he found in every level of life, is stressed almost beyond our capacity to exaggerate. "For though the new element of freedom and an individual has been admitted, yet the primordial atoms are prefigured and predetermined to moral issues, are in search of justice, and ultimate right is done." (21). The law of physics translate the laws of ethics. He saw in nature a force which was ever making the good advance toward the best, a force which was always destroying that which was useless. The very blood of man had a moral flow. "Things are saturated with the moral law. There is no escape from it. Violets and grass preach it; rain and snow, wind and tides, every change, every cause in Nature is nothing but a disguised missionary." (22). He saw a unity of thought and morals in all nature without any difference in quality, but only a slight difference in degree. The moral elements and the material elements are

20. See: Journal, Vol. 9. p. 81. 1857.

21. Works. VI. 219.

22. Works. X. 86.

closer than cousins, they are identical. On one level we say it is heat, but on the higher level we call it love. A physical law is also a moral rule. (23). There is in nature a breath of will which continually blows through the universe in the direction of right and necessity. Every particle of nature is busy shouting the lessons of the Ten Commandments. (But man, who is a part of nature, does not seem to join in the chorus.)

The moral power which he saw in nature gave him cause to believe in the inevitable progress of life. He was greatly attracted to the field of science, and accepted the theory of evolution; the classical pronouncement of evolution had not yet been made, but several scientists were preparing the way. His belief in the moral quality of nature led him to suggest continued progress. While the beginnings of everything are slow, there is in all things an accelerated march toward the highest. "The gracious lesson taught by science to this country is that the history of Nature from first to last is incessant advance from less to more, from rude to finer organization, the globe of matter thus conspiring with the principle of undying hope in man." (24). There is in everything an instinctive sense of the right which encourages all toward perfection. Nature never hurries, but goes steadily

23. See: Journal, Vol. 9. p. 490.

24. Works. XI. 525.

forward to complete her task. Her order can be trusted, and every stone will fall into its proper place. Through her own powers she insures herself; the frost may destroy a single harvest, but in so doing may kill the harmful insects. Revolutions will always shatter a rotten political or social system. As a cat always falls to land on her feet, so nature will always right herself. Nature kills conceit and all evil qualities, and gives a tone to man's body and mind. Men do not arrive at their best by imposing artificial laws upon themselves, but by following and obeying nature. The very sands of the sea shore are co-workers with man toward moral ends. The nature of man "will rule animal and mineral virtues, and blend with the courses of sap, of rivers, of winds, of stars, and of moral agents." (25). Man, by his own will, can not accelerate or block this inevitable advance. The rapid progress which he thought he saw in the United States was not the conscious work of reformers, "but the eternal effervescence of Nature." (26).

The moral quality which he saw in nature, and the conception of inevitable progress which grew out of this belief, helps to account for his excessive optimism. (27). Emerson

25. Works. III. 114.

26. Works. XI. 530.

27. Many attempts to trace the sources of Emerson's optimism have been made. Mr. Christy has made a summary of them: intellectual aloofness, direct influence of theories, theory of compensation, mystical ecstasy, and evolutionary doctrine. (See: The Orient in American Transcendentalism, pp. 120-1.)

blamed Swedenborg for being unable to see this necessary progression and onwardness in each creature. Individuals or nations that stood in the way of the steady march of progress must inevitably go down to oblivion. When a man is uncertain of the way he should take, he may drift, for the current of nature flows in the right direction and will float him onward and upward.

c. The Spiritual Element in Nature.

As we have seen, the "Enraptured Yankee" seldom made a careful distinction between religion and ethics, for he usually looked upon them as being identical, both being the product of intuition. It may be noted that in one place he made religion the emotional by-product of ethics, but no such consistent position is defended. More often he assumed that the moral content of religion was the significant element to be considered; the religious forms could be dropped or changed without any depreciation. He seemed to assume, although he never seemed to explain with any clarity, a distinction between the terms "religion" and "spiritual"; the former often applied to the form, the latter to the content. The discrimination is never clearly or consistently kept. Since the terms "moral" and "spiritual" are so closely related in

his thinking, it is not surprising to find that nature is also endowed with a powerful spiritual significance. The usual emphasis upon the unity of all life, along with the theory of immanence, prepares one to expect his theory of the spiritual quality of nature.

All parts of nature equally revealed God; he said, "The true doctrine of omnipresence is that God reappears with all his parts in every moss and cobweb." (28). He might reasonably be asked, "What element of moral choice is to be found in a cobweb, or in a piece of moss"? Such a question would probably contain too many personal implications for him to appreciate; the moral and spiritual relationships, being based upon law, have become less personal and intimate. He disagreed with Channing who believed that nature was an inadequate revelation of God, thus making it necessary to depend upon the revelation to be found in the Bible. (29). The familiar poem which begins: "Good-Bye, proud world! I'm going home", ends thus:

I laugh at the love and the pride of man,
At the sophist schools and the learned clan;
For what are they all, in their high conceit,
When men in the bush with God may meet? (30).

28. Works. II. 101.

29. Speaking of Channing, he said, "He considered God's word to be the only expounder of his works, and that Nature had always been found insufficient to teach men the great doctrines which Revelation inculcated." (Journal, Vol. 1. p. 290. October 1823.)

30. Works. IX. 4.

This expression may be considered by some to be the product of poetic license, but the idea is duplicated throughout the Essays and the Journal. "Spinoza pronounced that there was but one substance; yes, verily; but that boy yonder told me yesterday he thought the pine log was God! ... what can Spinoza tell the boy?" (31). He was pleased that nature was such a thin screen, for it allowed the glory of the Universal to break through continually.

Nature was a silent witness for God; nature was an active agent, preaching to man and coercing him. "What is a farm but a mute gospel? The chaff and the wheat, weeds and plants, blight, rain, insects, sun, -- it is a sacred emblem from the first furrow of spring to the last stack which the snow of winter overtakes in the fields." (32). Nature is the supreme ally of the spiritual and lends all pomp and splendor to her. Nature is always speaking of the spiritual, always suggesting the absolute. If a man will learn the true way of worship, let him turn to the wisdom of nature. "The happiest man is he who learns from nature the lesson of worship." (33). Thus may man approach the spirit of God, may become God, as he cultivates this relationship with nature with more care and understanding.

31. Journal, Vol. 6. p. 516. 1844.

32. Works. I. 42.

33. Works. I. 61; also see: Journal, Vol. 4. p. 36. April 2, 1836.

The Christian theology was not to be found in the ancient creeds or the stuffy Churches, but he contended that one must turn to nature to find the pure theology. "We can never see Christianity from Christendom; but from the pastures, from a boat in the pond, from the song of a starling, we possibly may." (34). It seemed to amuse him to be able to irritate and puzzle the orthodox Christians and clergymen. He said he was unable to find any real spirit of truth in the sermons of the day. But the real truth was to be found among unpretentious people as they went about their daily tasks; uncontaminated truth was to be found in the unspoiled and natural conduct of men. Those who studied nature needed no special revelation, for the trinity of goodness, beauty, and truth was to be found among all homely people. "The mystery of triangulation, of the Trinity in theology, and in philosophy, runs through Nature. The father, mother, and child are a single example." (35).

The Unitarians, following the ideas of Rousseau, emphasized the goodness of nature, but Emerson seemed to have advanced beyond them. This is a system in which nature has

34. Journal, Vol. 5. p. 407. May 31, 1840.

35. Ibid. Vol. 9. p. 489. 1863. "For the Universe has three children, born at one time, which reappear under different names in every system of thought, whether they be called cause, operation and effect; or, more poetically, Jove, Pluto, Neptune; or theologically, the Father, the Spirit, and the Son; but which we will call here the Knower, the Doer, and the Sayer. These stand respectively for the love of truth, for the love of good, and for the love of beauty." (Works. III. 6-7.)

been made divine. In spite of a doctrine in which self-reliance is emphasized, we find the following idea expressed which seems to carry with it Christian implications: "We are not to do, but to let do; not to work, but to be worked upon." (36).

The question which should be asked, is, "By whom or by what is one to be worked upon"? The Christian would answer, "One is to be worked upon by a personal God who is outside and above man, as well as within man." Emerson's answer, according to his belief, "We are to be worked upon by an impersonal God, a God of law, a God who has revealed Himself sufficiently in all nature and in all men." His answer is more closely related to the wise passiveness of Wordsworth than to the meditation of the Christian saints; it is nearer the pantheistic reverie of eastern monism. St. Paul and Emerson have different theologies. The former said, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (37). The latter would say, "All things work together for good to them that understand and merge with nature."

36. Works. VI. 213.

37. Romans, 8: 28. (Holman Edition of the King James' Version. Philadelphia, Penn. U. S. A.)

3. The Romantic View of Nature.

The poetic spirit in Emerson responded to the spirit of romanticism which was prominent among the German philosophers and was made popular by the British poets. In many lands men turned from the mathematical interpretation of life to the spiritual interpretation. Undisciplined imagination, intuition, and excessive emotion began to exert an influence upon the thoughts of men. The world of nature had a new significance for the romanticists. As many another romanticist, Emerson loved to wander aimlessly in the woods, dreaming of its beauty, and considering the close relationship to be found between man and nature. He said he enjoyed lying in the lap of nature, absorbing all its beauty and goodness. "I suppose there is no more abandoned epicure and opium-eater than I. I taste every hour of these autumn days. Every light from the sky, every shadow on the earth, ministers to my pleasure. I love this gas. I grudge to move or to labor or to change my book or to will, lest I should disturb the sweet dream."

(38). The mysterious beauty and power of nature charm Emerson and sometimes cause him to prefer the company of nature to the fellowship of friends. "Still am I a poet in the sense of a perceiver and dear lover of the harmonies

that are in the soul and in matter, and specially of the correspondences between these and those. A sunset, a forest, a snow storm, a certain view, are more to me than many friends and do ordinarily divide my day with my books." (39). The call of the big city found no response in him. He was not at home in the company of people, but was satisfied when he could spend his time alone with his books in his study. He was always a lonely man with few intimate friends; he seemed to think he had outgrown most of his friends. "It is sad to outgrow our preachers, our friends, and our books, and find them no longer potent. Proclus and Plato last me still, yet I do not read them in a manner to honor the writer" (40). Little excursions into the country brought him joy, particularly when Thoreau could accompany him and point out to him some of the details of nature which would have escaped his own observation. For two years Thoreau served as handy-man about the Emerson home. "Emerson was a powerful absorber, and learned more from Thoreau of wonders in Nature than he had ever dreamed before. Thoreau sharpened the elder man's eyes and fascinated him with details where previously he had been prone to see only mystic Wholes. Whether the younger man derived as much from Emerson is a question." (41).

39. Letters, Vol. 1. p. 435. Written to Lydia Jackson. Concord. February 1, 1835.

40. Journal, Vol. 6. p. 221. July 12, 1842.

41. Phillips Russell: Emerson: The Wisest American, p. 204.

Emerson's experiences in his garden, or among his fruit trees were a bit discouraging, and without the magic touch of Thoreau he would have been quite helpless. While he liked to view nature from a comfortable distance, while he liked to dream about the beauties of nature, he was never very excited about trying to live close to nature as Thoreau had done. He was happiest when he could avoid the hardships which nature brought, and he always preferred to spend the night at home in his own comfortable bed. A few camping experiences had dissuaded him from the ideal of living wild among the Indians as some of the romanticists had suggested. The house in Concord was too close to nature for such an idea to have any power.

V. Ramakrishna has classified Emerson as a Nature Mystic who was in close agreement with the romantic ideas of Wordsworth. (42). The rapture of the mystic, the vision and ecstasy of the Hindu, and the expansiveness of the romanticist, all seem to be a part of the unexpressible joy which he experiences. "I have no hostility to nature, but a child's love

42. "And here he stands nearest of kin to Wordsworth, distinguished from him by this contrast that, while Wordsworth sees more into 'the life of things' and beholds a feeling personality in the Nature-Spirit and draws therefrom 'more joy and consolation' ... Emerson strikes more upon 'the unity of things' and a fusing immanence through the Nature-Spirit and derives therefrom more 'power' over, and 'endurance' against." (Emerson--His Muse and Message, pp. 70-1.)

to it. I expand and live in the warm day like corn and melons. Let us speak her fair." (43). He loved nature because of her great wisdom and because of the close unity of nature with all.

The wood is wiser far than thou;
The wood and wave each other know
Not unrelated, unaffied,
But to each thought and thing allied,
Is perfect Nature's every part,
Rooted in the mighty Heart. (44).

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Wiser far than human seer,
Yellow-breeched philosopher!
Seeing only what is fair,
Sipping only what is sweet,
Thou dost mock at fate and care,
Leave the chaff, and take the wheat. (45).

Nature was to him a guide to wisdom, a medicine which brought balance and healing, and a stimulator of inspiration. "I have scarce a day-dream on which the breath of the pines has not blown, and their shadows waved. Shall I not then call my little book, *Forest Essays*?" (46). To immerse one's self in nature, learn the lessons of life from her, converse with her daily, such could bring joy and peace to the human heart.

There are moments when he seems to lose his identity

43. Works. I. 59.

44. Works. IX. 54.

45. Works. IX. 40.

46. Journal, Vol. 5. pp. 513-4. January 31, 1841.

in the unity with nature; at other times nature seems to acquire human characteristics. Oliver Wendell Holmes believed his friend Waldo often seemed to clothe himself in the landscape. "Here is a curious extract from 'The Adirondacs,' in which the reader need not stop to notice the parallelism with Byron's -----

The sky is changed, --- and what a change! O night
And storm and darkness, ye are wondrous strong.

Now Emerson -----

And presently the sky is changed: O world!
What pictures and what harmonies are thine!
The clouds are rich and dark, the air serene,
So like the soul of me, what if't were me?" (47).

The conversation which is carried on between Emerson and nature is not only to be found in his poetry, but is often expressed in his Journal. The woods, flowers, and birds seem to speak to him and a conversation ensues. "Afterwards, I was for a season active, devout and happy, and passing through the woods, the trees and asters looked up at me. There was I, and there were these placid creatures around, and the virtue that was in them seemed to pass from me into them." (48). After a lovely afternoon in the beautiful woods, when evening begins to fall, he is usually ready to retreat

47. Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 329.

48. Journal, Vol. 5. p. 456. September 8, 1840.

to Concord and the securities of home. While the feeling for nature is intense at moments, and never entirely disappears throughout his life, the unity of all life is most consistently located in man and less consistently in nature.

His ideal of nature is not to be found in any land, although it is nearer reality than the romantic ideal of Rousseau. The influence of idealism, romanticism, and naturalism upon Emerson brought disaster, for the attempt to combine elements from each could not be molded into a consistent unity. Reinhold Niebuhr has suggested the difficulty which is to be found in so many of the moderns: "Modern man, in short, cannot determine whether he shall understand himself primarily from the standpoint of his affinity with nature; and if the latter whether it is the harmless order and peace of nature or her vitality which is the real clue to his essence." (49).

Emerson saw the destructive element in impersonal nature which brought disaster to the self-willed individual. But as the individual merged himself into a unity with All, harmony and peace prevailed. The beauty, morality, and spirituality of nature received the greater emphases.

The Emersonian conception of nature may stand out more clearly if we place it along side the Christian conception. We have found that the goodness of nature has been emphasized;

49. The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. 1. p. 21.

nature was something to be followed and enjoyed; men should unite themselves with nature in order to live harmonious and happy lives. The orthodox Christian has seldom accepted this view, indeed, many have seen in nature an evil from which to withdraw. More often the Christian has looked upon nature as a rather neutral element which may be used for good or ill, but never was man encouraged to use it for mere pleasure. The Christian considered what man could make of nature, while Emerson emphasized what nature could make of man; if man will submit, nature will make him a saint, or another Jesus. Nature, according to the Christian conception, was to be held under check, to be disciplined, to be used for spiritual purposes. Emerson has endowed nature with greater powers, powers which are not distinguishable from the powers of God. Man is urged to follow the Universal Law which is to be found within himself. The laws for man and nature are brought into unity. The distinction between the natural man and the spiritual man is Christian. For the Concord Sage, the natural man is the truly spiritual man.

The orthodox Christian, except in cases where romanticism has influenced Christianity, has been unable to accept the morally endowed nature of our author. Most Christians have reserved the term "morality" to suggest the idea of choice, and thus it is used for the conception of human decision.

The blending of man and nature into a unity is not a Christian conception. In one system, the natural instincts are to be controlled and kept under severe discipline; in the other system, the natural instincts are to be followed as the inner voice of Universal Reason or intuition.

While the Christian view of nature has not always been clearly defined, it has usually kept a distinction between nature and man. God, man, and nature have been considered distinct entities, although a coherent relationship has been understood. The Emersonian unity has been carried to such an extreme that the voice of God, or the revelation of God, can not be distinguished from the voice of nature; in fact, there is no need for such a distinction where the same revelation is given in man and nature alike. The Christian cannot accept the revelation of nature when it is considered to be on the same level and quality as the revelation in man. Neither can the Christian accept the revelation of any man as identical with the revelation given through Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER FIVE

C O N C L U S I O N

1. The Task of Classification.

The Spiritual Outlook of Ralph Waldo Emerson defies one to identify it with any one of the traditional systems of thought. (1). The "Enraptured Yankee" seldom used the terms "Pantheism," "Romanticism," or other terms of classification because he desired to entangle himself with no single philosophical pattern. He looked upon each man as a vital individual and a new creation; hence no man could be identified by generalizations. Our attempt to show his relationship and indebtedness to various systems is made difficult by his habit of inconsistency and his eclectic methods. The peculiar mental habit of Emerson has been accurately described: "He was never a coherent thinker. And he had a way of believing that when he contradicted himself he was simply expressing another side of the truth." (2). The contradictory ideas which he gleaned from many sources remain side by side in his incoherent outlook. Order can not

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1. "You are about to fix Emerson as a Platonist and you find he has partaken of that loaf and is feeding on the religions of the East. You are about to fix him as an Orientalist and you find him back in Christianity, announcing that the Christian religion is 'profoundly true.'" (Newton Dillaway: Prophet of America, p. 77.)
 2. Lynn Harold Hough: The Meaning of Human Experience, p. 41.

be arranged from this chaotic collection of ideas, nevertheless we shall try to classify some of the main points in his outlook.

Several writers have drawn their conclusions of the Emersonian system of thought, resulting in diverse opinions. This is to be expected, for each individual brings with him his own bias or preconception. Such a wide difference of opinion is not alone the product of the personal tastes of the writers, but is caused by Emerson's eclectism. He may be classified as Stoic, Christian, or Neoplatonist with sufficient evidence to sustain each judgment. There is no single classification which would be adequate to describe his outlook. Thus we shall deal with the essential classifications which have been made of Emerson's view, especially with those which we believe are based upon sound judgment and dependable scholarship.

Many have agreed that he was a mystic, and the evidence will support them in their judgments. Apparently a superficial reading and understanding of the "Enraptured Yankee" can lead one to the same conclusion. (3). After a careful study,

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3. Mr. Myron Forrest Wicke writes: "A careful and complete reading of Emerson shows him to be neither 'naif' nor merely a composer of disjointed though interesting epigrams. Emerson is fundamentally a mystic, and only in terms of mysticism does his thought gain coherence and weight." ("Religion in Life", p. 556.) We disagree with Mr. Wicke in his judgment of Emerson's style and coherence. Mr. Frank B. Sanforn called Emerson a mystic, but we can not agree with him when he maintains that Emerson had a clear understanding of sin. (Ralph Waldo Emerson, pp. 25; 122.)

Mr. Frederic Ives Carpenter has traced the mystical element to a Neoplatonic source. "Under his (Thoman Taylor) influence Emerson also ascribed to Plato many Neoplatonic ideas, and, in his essay on Plato described the Greek philosopher as half an Orientalist." (4). Emerson's Essays and Journal give ample evidence of his high regard for Plotinus, Porphyry, and Proclus. The Oriental literature which he read with great enthusiasm gave further impetus to his mystical experiences. The influence of Coleridge and Wordsworth reached across the Atlantic to encourage the mystic way. Emerson was highly pleased with the extreme mystical expressions of Swedenborg. The mystical adventures of Bronson Alcott, and the theory of the "inner light" promoted by his Quaker friends attracted our author. Mr. Hill's classification may be regarded with respect: "As it was, he was indeed more of a Quaker than anything else, if one had to class him with any of the sects." (5).

Emerson's theory of the intuitive approach to knowledge, and the idea of continual revelation, show the influence of mysticism. It is most probable that Emerson drew heavily upon the Neoplatonic idea of "emanation" as he formulated his idea of the Over-Soul. His system was strengthened and con-

4. Emerson and Asia, p. 40.

5. J. Arthur Hill: Emerson and His Philosophy, p. 47.

firmed as he read the literature of the Hindus. (6). Whatever the sources may have been, he periodically withdrew from society for the purpose of meditation; sometimes he retreated into his study, and at other times he escaped into the woods. He suggested certain aids to nurture mystical experiences, although he affirmed that the moments of ecstasy could not be commanded or controlled. Great flashes of light and great moments of insight were common to him, and at such times he believed dependable truth was revealed. In such experiences he became one with the Universal, indeed, he became God. It is this emphasis that has rightly caused certain critics to charge him with Pantheism.

Although there is some difference of opinion concerning the classification of Emerson as a Pantheist, we are convinced that an element of Pantheism existed in him. If it is true that he came to this position independently, he found many sources to confirm his opinion. Stoicism, Hinduism, and Neoplatonism supplied him with ample source material. The idea of the unity of all life with Nature is to be found in Marcus Aurelius and in our author; the inclusiveness of the Being

6. "It has been suggested that Emerson got his title "Over-Soul" from the Hindu, rather than from the Neoplatonists. Further, the high regard for pure intuition shown by Plotinus is Oriental; as is also his extreme justification and love of mysticism. Lastly, and more specifically, the doctrines that matter is merely the absence of spirit, and that evil is merely the absence of good, are Eastern in their origin and development." (F. I. Carpenter, Emerson and Asia, p. 42.) Mr. Carpenter believes it more probable that Emerson's Over-Soul had its origin in Neoplatonism.

of Krishna expressed a unity which he accepted. At times, Emerson was unable to distinguish between good and evil; the saint and the murderer were serving their necessary ends. While the best expression of Pantheism is to be found in his poem "Brahma," there are frequent examples, although few consistent ones, to be found throughout his works. His growing conviction of the final absorption of the individual into the "One," identifies him with the pantheistic tradition. The Indian theory that one may finally attain the ultimate truth or reality by the process of meditation has influenced the Concord Sage. Frequently he has given less significance to the will and more emphasis upon knowledge as the method of acquiring salvation. However, the emphasis upon the individual, and the tendency to center all in man rather than God, makes it impossible to call him a strict Pantheist. We can only say that the pantheistic element is present in him; it is one of the many elements which may be found among his many thoughts.

The term "Romanticist" may also be applied to our author, for in some respects his ideas revive and reflect the romantic tradition. While Irving Babbitt did not classify Emerson as a complete romanticist, he saw certain romantic tendencies in him. "This throwing off of the yoke of both Christian and classical discipline in the name of temperament is the

essential aspect of the movement in favor of original genius." (7). The acceptance of intuition as the approach to knowledge, disassociated with any outside authority, led him to over-emphasize the unique and the unusual element in man and nature.

The idea of the goodness of man and nature was stressed by many of the romanticists; Emerson was impressed by this theory as he found it in Confucius, but his idea of the goodness of man is largely Rousseauistic. The "Enraptured Yankee" accepted the optimistic conception of man and upon it built his idea of self-reliance. Mr. Stanley Hopper has presented one of the dangers of this romantic view: "Romanticism is a prime example of the pursuing of perfection on the plane of the human. This implies a transposition of the problem of moral evil. The dogma of original sin is exchanged for a naive belief in the natural goodness of man." (8). We accept Mr. Hopper's estimate of romanticism, and consider it an exact description of Emerson's conception of the goodness of man. Thus the Concord Sage deserves a definite place in the romantic tradition.

Along side the romantic tendencies there are many principles of Stoicism to be found in our author; the influence of Stoicism upon him has been noted by several biographers, but we believe the influence is greater than most of them

7. Rousseau and Romanticism, p. 46.

8. The Crisis of Faith, p. 105.

have suggested. (9). The Stoic idea of the unity of all, and the reliance upon Reason which governs the universe, differ little from the unity which has been stressed by our author. We shall recall that Stoicism was originally founded upon a materialistic philosophy, while the Emersonian system is largely idealistic. Yet the emphasis upon "cause and effect," and the prominent place given to self-reliance and moral goodness, are not unlike the principles of Stoicism.

(10). The idea of inner harmony, which can be destroyed by nothing outside the self, is common to both systems. The passive element in Emerson, and the absence of emotion and compassion have a close resemblance to the attitude of Zeno.

9. As one re-reads the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, the similarities of the two systems become more apparent. Emerson's idea of providence, combined with the idea of "cause and effect," may be found expressed by Marcus Aurelius on page 24. "To reverence and serve the divinity within himself" (p. 28), has been taken and emphasized by Emerson. The whole idea of self-reliance is to be found in the Stoic system: "Rely upon yourself, for it is the nature of the principle that rules within us, to be satisfied with honesty, and the inward quiet consequent to it." (p. 111.) The continued emphasis upon law is to be seen in each. The idea of evil as mere ignorance is also to be found. "It is the privilege of human nature to love those that disoblige us. To practice this, you must consider that the offending party is of kin to you, that ignorance is the cause of the misbehaviour, and the fault is involuntary." (pp. 109-10.)
10. "And indeed, if one reduce the doctrine of Zeno and the Stoic sect, who were the pre-Christians, the religions of the Greek and Roman states; you will find not many thoughts, but a few thoughts; one thought, perhaps, --- self-reliance. Christianity insisted on the obverse of the medal, on love, but not on any variety or wealth of thoughts." (Journal, Vol. 8. p. 575. 1855.)

The tendency to substitute law for love, as the basis of the relationship between God and man, is also Stoical.

But we are not trying to identify the systems of Zeno and Emerson. It would be false to assume that the latter consciously adopted the system of Stoicism. However, the many similarities suggest a definite influence.

Finally, we consider the question which has stimulated a wide variety of answers. "Was Emerson a Christian?" Some have strongly defended him as such, while others have denied him the name. Mr. Sanborn wrote: "Dr. Greenwood of King's Chapel said he was not. (A Christian). John Pierpont maintained he was an atheist -- a downright atheist. But nobody doubted he was a virtuous and devout man." (11). Our brief definition of a Christian is, namely, one who believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and endeavors to live by this faith. With this definition as our basis of judgment, we can not include Emerson in the main body of the Christian tradition. He did not express a Christian belief, but he unconsciously depended upon his Christian inheritance, and lived according to Christian ethics in many respects. While he broke faith with the Christian tradition, he was never able to free himself from the influence of a Puritanic moralism." (12).

11. Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 58.

12. See: Denton J. Snider: A Biography of Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 87.

2. The Man and His System.

We believe the Emersonian outlook should be considered with the understanding that it was formulated by one who was trying to minimize the influence of classical and Christian tradition. Reacting from the orthodox Christianity of his day, he constructed a system to take its place. Many of the severe criticisms which he aimed at so-called Christians, who abused and distorted the Christian faith, were valid and sorely needed. He condemned the spiritless observance of forms and creeds, and ignored the Christian doctrine of sin. It is sometimes true that the man who thinks and lives by reactions is often more dependable in his denials than in his assertions. His criticisms of those who blindly followed the Christian way are more reliable than the system which he constructed to put in its place. His whole spiritual view was prompted by a desire to escape from sin and responsibility. An outlook based upon a negative spirit of revolt can hardly be expected to possess a conquering power which has any degree of permanence.

We have been dealing with one whose Christian moral practices were more traditional than his belief. In spite of all his railings against the forms of Christianity he rather stoically abided by her essential moral laws. He was

a good man, quiet and inoffensive; many were more impressed by his saintly life than by his liberal ideas. (13). We agree that Emerson lived a good moral life, judged by the standards of conventional society. However, his good life is not to be compared with the life of Bunyan's "Christian" who faithfully struggled onward through perilous difficulties toward the Celestial City. Emerson lived a quiet and peaceful life because he never faced the tragic condition of human experience, but always sought a way of escape. J. Arthur Hill was dimly aware of this absence of struggle in Emerson, but his interpretation is inadequate; he said: "A curious thing about Emerson is that he never seems to have gone through any particular struggle or even depression, in attaining the saving faith." (14). We believe Carlyle had a better understanding of Emerson's false optimism, and expressed it when he wrote to a friend, "He is an excellent, pure and placid soul; the only fault I have to (with) him, that which the Prophet Isaiah expresses in these words: "Woe to them that are in ease in Zion"! " (15). There is a vast difference

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13. Carlyle said of Emerson: "What I love in the man was his health, his unity with himself, all seemed to find adjustment with him, spontaneous, peaceable, even humble." (Wilson: Carlyle at His Zenith, pp. 335-6.) Father Taylor, The Methodist Preacher to the sailors in Boston, called him a saint. Others have seen in him qualities which they have compared with qualities in the life of Jesus.
 14. Emerson and His Philosophy, p. 45. Mr. Hill does not suggest that Emerson failed to face the reality of sin, but instead, explains the lack of struggle in Emerson by the good Christian environment in which he was nurtured.
 15. Wilson and MacArthur: Carlyle in Old Age, p. 267.

between the personality of the man who by faith faces the tragic element in life and wins through by the grace of God, and the character of the man who exists peaceably by refusing to face the tragic condition of sin. Emerson lived unconsciously upon his Christian inheritance and neither faced the implications of the Christian faith nor followed his own inconsistent beliefs.

3. The Spiritual Outlook of Emerson.

The spiritual outlook of Emerson was not spiritual in the Christian sense; instead of a Christian spirituality, he constructed a philosophy of the spiritual. He conceived all as spiritual and not material, whereas the Christian has always made a distinction between the spiritual and the natural. His approach was similar to the Stoic attempt to find a way of life, to find a philosophy by which to live; it was an attempt to discover a way to live by moral principles. While this approach may be observed in the Christian tradition, the dominant note is to be found in the passionate outreach of the human heart for salvation. One is the story of the self-reliant man making himself at home in the world; the other is the story of a pilgrim who depends upon the grace of God.

We have observed that Emerson's conception of God became

less Christian as his system evolved. The divinity of Christ was definitely denied; this denial necessarily eliminated an important clue to the discovery of the character of God. The character of Jesus Christ was no longer a reliable indication of the attributes of God. He assumed the existence of God, but the character of his God is quite vague and indefinite. He assumed that God was good and just, but the qualities of mercy, love, and compassion are absent from his belief. He who called for a first-hand relationship with God never had a person to person, a Father to son relationship with God. It may be that Emerson's inability to share deeply in human fellowship made it difficult for him to understand an intimate relationship with a personal God.

This conception of an impersonal God, from which the idea of transcendence has been eliminated, caused our author to put his faith in an immanent spirit which flowed into man and nature alike. When man allows this spirit full control, great flashes of insight and great moments of peace are experienced. God and nature become so closely united in man that the personality of God is lost, and the relationship is no longer personal, but is dependent upon impersonal law. Régis Michaud was aware of Emerson's reliance upon law when he said that nothing ever distracted the "Enraptured Yankee" from his worship of laws. (16). Sacrifice, love, and compassion have

16. See: The Enraptured Yankee, pp. XVI-XVII.

little significance in this system of law. Man can not have a person to person relationship with an Over-Soul, a Divine Reason, or any impersonal law. Emerson has gifted man with certain qualities which we believe belong to a transcendent God, and the inevitable result is self-worship. Thus it is not God who receives the emphasis in his outlook, but the self-reliant man who tries the impossible task of transcending himself.

The self-reliant man is more concerned with morals than with faith; faith in man is substituted for Christian faith in God. This scheme of ethics does not depend upon exterior tradition or authority, but individual intuition. Justice will be done as each man acts according to his own nature which has been tuned to harmonize with the universal; each man must listen to and obey his own intuitions. Whereas this notion did not bring disastrous results to Emerson's personal conduct, (since he seldom acted upon his own incoherent ideas) it has led many to accept a relative standard of morals. This practice of relying upon intuition encourages men to pursue the unusual and unique; such undisciplined intuition often degenerates into romantic reverie. We believe this scheme will finally deteriorate because it is based upon relative standards.

Emerson's inaccurate and uncritical view of man's nature

is a most serious deficiency in his outlook. The Christian can not accept his assertion that the Biblical idea of the Fall is to be interpreted as the "disesteem of man"; the true Redemption is not just self-trust. (17). The orthodox have been unable to tolerate the optimistic theory that evil is good in the making, that sin is mere unripeness, and that the process of education alone will solve the human situation. We do not know what caused our author to try to ignore the existence of evil; it may have been the result of uncritical observation, a peculiar quirk in his own nature, or a deliberate attempt to escape responsibility; perhaps it may have been a combination of the three. It may be that he believed the dignity of man could be preserved in no other way. The Christian maintains that the dignity of man is not sustained by emphasizing the goodness of man and denying the transcendence of God. Mr. Stanley Hopper expresses the Christian position when he says: "Knowledge is proud that it knows so much; humanity is 'contrary' since it knows no more! Nevertheless, the true dignity of man consists precisely in his capacity to sin; and the fact of sin itself attests to the essentially theological nature of man." (18). The Christian view is more tragic than the expansive and optimistic view

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17. See: Letters, Vol. 2. p. 213. Letter to Harrison Gray Otis Blake. Concord. August 1, 1839.
 18. The Crisis of Faith, p. 226.

of Emerson; it is more tragic because it refuses to lie about the nature of man. The Emersonian outlook is over-optimistic, and we believe it will eventually degenerate into a grim Stoicism or an evasive mysticism.

Emerson made an effort to strengthen his optimism by a spiritual interpretation of nature. He endowed nature with many spiritual qualities and made it divine. He saw certain powers in nature that promoted inevitable progress on the physical, moral, and spiritual levels of existence. The individual wills of men were overpowered by nature, thus assuring moral ends in spite of men's resistance. This overendowment of nature was the result of his failure to discriminate between man and nature. The Concord Sage became incoherent because he tried to force opposing ideas into a false unity; he failed to keep a distinct division between God, man, and nature. Gilbert Murray's description of the Stoic system may be applied to the outlook of Emerson: "All the world is working together. It is all one living whole, with one soul through it." (19). God, man, and nature working together for good made it possible for him to prophesy the arrival of the Golden Age in the near future. Yet the tragic events which culminated in two World Wars in the twentieth century do not sustain his optimism.

19. The Stoic Philosophy, p. 37.

This optimistic system does not help man to find a personal God with whom it is possible to have a first-hand relationship. We find in it no coherent belief which can sustain men, and no personal God who can lift men above themselves. His theory of morals is based upon an attempt to escape the reality of evil, and as such it can not satisfy the moral nature of man. Since the idea of the self-sufficiency of man has proven to be inadequate to meet the needs of life, he has unconsciously endowed nature with spiritual powers to atone for man's deficiency. In a sense, the Spiritual Outlook of the "Enraptured Yankee" is not spiritual, for when everything is made spiritual, nothing is spiritual. The Spiritual Outlook of Emerson might more accurately be described as an "in-look," for the Over-Soul is chiefly located within man. We are unable to find in his outlook the unity which he believed he saw in everything, but instead we find a system filled with incoherent and opposing ideas.

4. The Influence of Emerson.

The Concord Sage did not attract many men or women as disciples; he said he did not want disciples. He wanted to stimulate men to think for themselves and formulate their own outlooks. Then too, it would have been difficult for any-

one to understand exactly what he believed and taught, since his notions were so inconsistent. He made no serious attempt to found a school of thought, although he was occasionally tempted to do so. The Transcendental Club, consisting of several outstanding men and women about Boston, had a brief existence. The Journal "Dial" never gained a sufficient circulation to enable it to exist for any length of time. At one time Emerson thought of gathering a few great thinkers to establish a University after the ideal of his dreams. He was able to persuade a few literary men to come and live near him at Concord. But he was never able to share an intimate friendship. He was best appreciated by those who could glimpse his spirit from a distance. The spirit of the man brought inspiration to those who read his Essays and to those who listened to his lectures. The ability to inspire others seemed to be missing from his conversations, and as an impromptu speaker he was helpless. The bright phrases and the clever epigrams were the product of his solitary life in the study. Many literary men and women called at Concord to see the man whose Essays they had read, but most of them went away unimpressed and disappointed.

There were a few friends about Concord in whom one may see the interplay of influence. Henry Thoreau spent many hours with Emerson, and he and Waldo shared many ideas.

Waldo stated in his Journal that Henry had taken most of his ideas from him, but this assertion would be difficult to prove. Undoubtedly the two stimulated each other, but we believe Emerson received more from Thoreau than he gave in return. At one time the "Enraptured Yankee" reflected upon the strangeness of the situation in which he found himself: he thought Thoreau, Alcott, and he shared the unique theory of intuition, while it was to be found in no other quarter. Such an observation would not survive a critical examination, for the idea was to be found in many places. Alcott used the theory of intuition in his interpretation of religion and society. Bronson Alcott believed the ideas of Waldo were practical, but Waldo sat back and watched the impetuous Bronson fail in one experiment after another. While Margaret Fuller and Theodore Parker were influenced by Emerson, the degree of influence is difficult to evaluate, for they were strong individualists, determined to express their own particular traits.

A friendship was continued for many years between Emerson and Carlyle, and it may be traced in their correspondence. The friendship was close, considering the difference in temperament to be found in the two men. It was hardly an intimate friendship, but perhaps as intimate a relationship as Emerson was capable of experiencing. Carlyle had no deep

respect for the ideas of Emerson, although he was attracted to the inner peace and harmony of the American. Carlyle remarked to Shepherd: "'God forbid that I should ever be governed by Emerson! We should have chaos come again!'" (20).

Jane Carlyle accused Emerson of taking her husband's ideas, and her husband confirmed the accusation:

"Can Emerson's ideas be regarded as original?" asked Duffy, and was answered:- "Emerson took his system out of Sartor and my other writings in the first instance, but he worked it out in a way of his own. It is based on truth, undoubtedly; but Emerson constantly forgets that one truth may require to be modified by a precisely opposite truth. His writings want consistency and a decisive intelligible result. One is constantly disappointed at their suddenly stopping short and leading to nothing. They are full of beauties -- diamonds, or at times, bits of painted glass, strung on a thread, -- which have no necessary connection with each other. He frequently hits upon isolated truths, but they remain isolated -- they nowhere combine into an intelligible theory of life." (21).

It has been suggested that Emerson, after his first visit with Carlyle in Scotland, went home to develop the ideas to which he had been introduced by his friend. While we regard this suggestion as an exaggeration, we conclude that the direction of influence was from Europe to America.

But there was one American who might even be called a disciple of Emerson; at least he received his original stimulus from the New England Transcendentalist. Walt Whitman confessed that his "pot had been set boiling" by the Concord Sage. Mr.

20. Wilson: Carlyle to Threescore-and-Ten, p. 490.

21. Wilson: Carlyle At His Zenith, p. 138; also cf. Townsend Scudder: The Lonely Wayfaring Man, p. 110.

Henry Binns is quite accurate in his analysis, "Whitman had declared himself unequivocally for the faith in life which was Emerson's gospel; and he smacked of the soil and air of America in a way that Emerson could not but love. Here at last was actual incarnation of the ideas he had so long been hurling at the heads of the American people." (22). Emerson was a bit disturbed by the frankness of Whitman's expressions. John Burroughs was right when he said that Walt was too physical for Waldo. (23). The Puritanic moralism which existed in Emerson would not allow him to express his own liberal ideas as Whitman could express them.

As we survey the wider influence of the "Enraptured Yankee" the task becomes more difficult and less direct. Mr. J. Arthur Hill says the task of tracing his influence requires an indirect approach. (24). There is general agreement that Emerson helped to stimulate a creative style of writing in America; at least it was a change from the formalistic styles which many copied from Europe. It would be difficult to justify the statement that he introduced to America a new scholarship. (25). It would be more accurate to say he stimulated the habit of

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22. A Life of Walt Whitman, p. 94; also cf. Frederic Ives Carpenter: Emerson and Asia, p. 247.
 23. See: Canby: Walt Whitman: An American, p. 155.
 24. See: Emerson and His Philosophy, pp. 113-116.
 25. See: Carpenter: Emerson and Asia, pp. 254-5.

reading widely, but there is little evidence of careful scholarship to be found in Emerson. He introduced the writings of Carlyle and the Oriental literature to the United States. But such influences are chiefly within the field of literature, and we are mainly interested in the influence of his spiritual ideas.

The continual emphasis upon the importance of a first-hand religion had a lasting effect upon many men and women. This fresh outlook contained a vital spirit, and it was attractive to those who felt burdened by the authority of the orthodox faith. Here was a spirit which encouraged men to eliminate what they considered the unessentials of life to allow freedom its vital expression. It almost seemed that Emerson hoped to create a wild pentecostal atmosphere among his readers and hearers. His message and spirit helped to produce strange religious practices and unorthodox sects. By introducing ideas from various world religions he had a part in preparing the country for the comparative study of religions. In many ways he challenged men to discard the orthodox belief, and many responded; they did not accept the Emersonian outlook as a rule of life, but they chose to cultivate the habit of undisciplined freedom which allowed them to express their own individual impulses.

When one comes to judge the influence of Emerson, there

is one factor that causes hesitation, namely, the vast gulf between his practice and his message. The message of the man, if followed, would seem to produce men like Walt Whitman, while the personal conduct of Emerson was described as saintly. One is almost led to suspect that Emerson has been misinterpreted; perhaps he never clearly expressed some of his deepest convictions, but took it for granted that men understood them. It is our conclusion that he gave up the Christian belief, but he continued to live according to the teaching he received in his youth. However, we believe a teacher is somewhat responsible, not only for the exact expression of his ideas, but also for the impression that his theories make upon those who follow him. Many of the ideas which Emerson expressed have been used as foundations for new and unfortunate ventures in religious thought.

The theory of evil as a negative quality, or evil as the absence of good, is not a new theory, but it was introduced to New England by our author. He often spoke of the illusive quality of evil and suffering. As the moral and spiritual aim of man is improved, he believed the evil and suffering would gradually disappear from the world. We believe that Mary Baker Eddy was influenced by this idea which she received from Emerson, and she began her religion of Christian Science. The writer has found this suggestion confirmed by

another. (26). Mary Baker Eddy might have found her leading notions in the Oriental literature, but the time and place of appearance of her new religion leads one to suspect the influence of the "Enraptured Yankee."

The theory of the intuitive approach to knowledge, along with the attitude of the mysterious element in life, has led one to find support for Spiritualism in the writings of our author. (27). The basis for such a conclusion may be found in the Essays, but one can hardly call Emerson the father of Spiritualism.

Mr. Denton J. Snider was right when he concluded that Transcendentalism had the buds of Pragmatism within it. (28). The Concord Sage prepared the ground for the pragmatists, William James and John Dewey. Emerson assumed and taught that the moral fruits of the Christian faith could be produced without the moral roots of faith. He lived upon the moral heritage of his Christian ancestors whose faith he denied;

26. "The so-called Christian Science with its wild-fire propagation from the chief Transcendental center, Boston, despite denials of Mother Eddy, shows no superficial likeness to Father Emerson, one of whose most smiting spiritual characteristics was the undervaluation, if not quite elimination of the Negative in man and even in God. Evil, ill, and the world generally is the grand illusion, which is to be cured by the new knowledge." (Denton J. Snider: A Biography of Ralph Waldo Emerson, pp. 164-5.)
27. "To those who are concerned in this work of psychical research, much of Emerson's teaching appeals with an almost startling appearance of prophetic insight." (J. Arthur Hill: Emerson and His Philosophy, p. 32.)
28. See: A Biography of Ralph Waldo Emerson, pp. 165-6.

he assumed that the same condition could exist in succeeding generations. We do not believe that Christian morals can be produced or even sustained for long when the Christian faith has been denied and forgotten.

Emerson enjoyed the height of his reputation about a century ago. We believe he would feel very much at home to-day in many of the liberal Churches in the United States. The theology expressed by the growing number of Neo-Orthodox theologians would irritate him immensely. But the average so-called Christian, with his good opinion of himself, his optimistic reliance upon education and science, would cause Emerson to be satisfied with the influence of his teaching. An accurate analysis of the spiritual condition of many men living in the United States during the first four decades of the twentieth century has been given by Reinhold Niebuhr:

Under the bland influence of the idea of progress, man, supposing himself more & more to be the measure of all things, achieved a singularly easy conscience and an almost hermetically smug optimism. The idea that man is sinful and needs redemption was subtly changed into the idea that man is by nature good and hence capable of indefinite perfectibility. This perfectibility is being achieved through technology, science, politics, social reform, education. Man is essentially good, says 20th Century liberalism, because he is rational, and his rationality is (if the speaker happens to be a liberal Protestant) divine, or (if he happens to be religiously unattached) at least benign. Thus the reason-defying paradoxes of Christian faith are happily bypassed. (29).

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29. "Time" The Weekly Magazine. March 8, 1948. Vol. LI, No. 10. Article, "Faith for a Lenten Age." p. 42. The quotation is taken from an attempt to survey the ideas of Reinhold Niebuhr.

This was the condition of liberal religion in the United States between the wars. If the Spiritual Outlook of Ralph Waldo Emerson were followed with diligence, it would produce the very condition which we actually find. Of course, many other systems of thought and various emotional appeals have had a part in producing such a condition. But we believe that Emerson's Spiritual Outlook must share much of the responsibility for the weakness of the orthodox Christian faith, and for the rapid growth of the liberal position in the United States.

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